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WHERE BELIEVERS MAY DOUBT

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OR

STUDIES IN BIBLICAL INSPIRATION AND OTHER PROBLEMS OF FAITH

BY

VINCENT J. McNABB, O.P.

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PREFACE

It may not be rash to hold that two intellectual gifts are still needed in fuller measure to bring Catholic apostles and apologists into touch with the thinkers of our day—the power of sight and of insight; in other words, the rare gifts of appreciation and of thinking. Nowadays when those outside the Fold are thinking earnestly if somewhat erratically, one of the first duties of the Catholic writer is to set a true price upon the good which lurks under every evil, the inner truth which ever remains the contradiction and strength of everything untrue. To refute a man we must point out where he is wrong; but to convince him we must point out where he is right. A still earlier duty than that of mastering our opponents' truths, is to have mastered our own by patient thinking.

No amount of mere reading can ever be a

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substitute for thinking. Three or four years of lecture-hearing and study may win a degree of theology. But it takes many years of dogged thought to mature a theologian; and the difference between one and the other is the difference between the heap of stones fresh wrought from the quarry and the finished wall that rises orderly and strongly from its foundations. Now, assuming that it is a covetable boon to reach and move the men who think, it may well be asked whether, and how far, our system of teaching philosophy and theology is calculated to form thinkers, *i.e.* not merely doctors of philosophy and theology, but philosophers and theologians. Is it possible that we lean too heavily or at least too exclusively on tradition with its corresponding subjective function of memory? There is some little truth in the paradox that no man may hope to be a philosopher who has a good memory. Assuredly if memory were merely to lead us to assimilate facts without principles, and to assent to conclusions without reference to their premises, it would be the bane of philosophy and theology. I leave to others to decide whether much of our philosophical and theological training is not the fostering of our powers of remembering

rather than of reasoning—of intellectual ready-reckoning rather than of thinking.

As a teacher of philosophy and theology of some years' standing I confess that there is one great practical motive biassing the teacher into a course of action which constructively discountenances his students' thinking. Every man has his own thought even as his own countenance. If our students are to think at all, they will think for themselves, or at least, as themselves. The likelihood is that their way of thinking will be so individual as to be startling. Indeed, if we are to be tolerant of them in their intellectual tutelage, we shall have to be patient of much that is ill thought out, and not a little that is absurd. Yet we must not feel loath to reflect, if only to reassure ourselves, that some men enter into possession of their own minds through the "obscure night" of material heresy,—as children learn to walk by stumbling.

The various Essays in these pages are an effort after thought. The writer has sought to encourage thinking in others by thinking himself. Even in the less obviously didactic essay on Scholasticism his aim has been to remind men how easy it is to make a verbal—how hard to make a real—generalisation. In these

days when a few pence make us owners of literary and scientific masterpieces there is an almost irresistible inclination amongst the crowd of readers to pour themselves headlong, like an army of volunteers, after the most successful scientific writer, and easily to accept the fashionable rejection of past philosophies. For this reason men need to be reminded that when scientists of no mean fame were belittling Scholasticism as an anachronism, a superseded thought-form, whatever philosophy the new naturalism possessed, was as old as Democritus, *i.e.* somewhat more anachronical than the patient and brilliant generalisations of Aristotle, whom scholastics honoured as their master.

Stimulated by the temperate spirit of his master, St. Thomas, the writer of these Essays has sought to approach in a frame of dispassionate criticism some of the problems which are an abiding phenomenon of our modern intellectual life. The example of what his master did in his day to adjust the claims of thought and tradition has urged him to seek as far as in him lay to lessen the distance between the old learning and the new; not in any headlong abandonment of the old, but in an unbiassed adhesion to what truths lie latent and perhaps

disfigured in the new; and still more in dutifulness towards the Author of Nature and Grace Who has condescended to our littleness by revealing Himself alike in the things of sight and the things of faith.

The title of the present work has been chosen not from any hesitation the writer has in championing his views, but merely because he has no desire to erect opinions into dogmas, as if pronouncements from a professor's chair were decisions *ex cathedra*. It is a real pleasure to him to believe that some will agree with what he has to say; and hardly less a pleasure to know that some others will have the mind, as all have the right, to part company with him. But whatever fate befall his opinions, he will count it pure gain if what he has taken some pains to think out should stimulate even a few of his readers to think for themselves, not obstinately but earnestly, not in sullen self-content but in simple-hearted submission to the future voice of the Church, with which alone the last appeal must be lodged and from which the final judgment must come.

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WHERE BELIEVERS MAY DOUBT

ST. THOMAS AND INSPIRATION

THE object of this paper is not to present a commentary on the doctrine of St. Thomas, but rather to show his principles as they are brought in contact with the Biblical problem by his present followers.

No one can refuse to admit that the question of the Sacred Scriptures is one of great difficulty and moment. It is no less than the reconciliation of two schools of thought whose opinions at first sight seem as opposed as that A is B, and A is not B.

A certain point of agreement serves as the starting-place for views apparently destructive of each other. It is a matter of mutual consent that the Sacred Books are the product of Hebrew social, intellectual, and moral activity. At various times and under different circumstances the events of Judaic life have issued

forth in literary products. Essentially a keenly self-conscious and introspective race, their autobiography, so to say, has a catholic and world-wide correspondence with man's higher strivings, which makes it the common heirloom of mankind. There is no book so catholic in its interests, its sympathies, its lessons, in the emotions it imparts or inspires, in the ready devotion which it has unfailingly won, as this *Biblia Sacra*, this Sacred Book of mankind as man. Yet we cannot fitly call it a book. It is a national literature. Its pages are the literary pantheon of Judaic thought. It contains almost every form of literary art, from the metric setting which it gives to its past traditions and its liturgical hymns, to the sober history of the Machabees and the gorgeous imagery of its prophetic Apocalypse. No lyric has ever exceeded the emotional deeps of the Hebrew psaltery. Where are there epics more simple and more inspiring than Exodus or the Machabees? The Book of Job is the tragedy of tragedies, the struggle between the joint powers of Heaven and Hell, and the patience of the righteous and faithful man. Holy Writ is history, hymnology, moral philosophy, a legislative code, and a collection of prophetic forecasts. In this view of the Holy Books Christian and sceptic are alike agreed.

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Here, however, begins the opposition between them. To a class of critics the Sacred Scripture is all we have described above, and nothing more. It is an incomparable literature. Less artificial and more simply national than Greek literary art, it has an unequalled power over men's minds and hearts; yet the differences between it and its nearest rival is not the fathomless abyss between the natural and the supernatural, but the canon dividing the touchingly natural from the somewhat apparently artificial. Hebrew literature is, indeed, inspired, because inspiring; not that it has a divine afflatus wanting to other national literatures, but because the poetic spirit which breathes as it will has visited it in larger measure, making it the world book of human nature. Its history is scarcely truer and hardly more objectively interesting than that of Assyria or Egypt or Greece or Rome. And though its moral code seems to give it a slight preponderance over that of neighbouring nations, still the difference is not so marked that we must trace it to supernatural legislation. The most—and how much it is!—that may be said of the Bible is that it is the Book of Man; not that it is the gift of God.

It is to this essentially human conception of the Bible that Catholic theologians have felt and still feel called upon to give a denial. Whilst the

rationalistic account of Holy Writ has been slowly maturing and strengthening, the Catholic tradition has made its message felt with increasing clearness. The deposit of faith in this, as in other matters, is assuredly a closed book, which, if any man shall take away from or add to, let him be anathema. Yet we must take care not to conceive of the deposit of faith as of a sacred hymn, committed faithfully to memory in the Church's childhood; unless, indeed, as often happens, the verses learned in childhood come back to our minds in joys and sorrows of life with the force of a new revelation. It would be a more accurate view of God's dealings with the mind of the Church to represent the deposit as a body of directions granted to the Church in order that she may not hesitate in choosing the way to follow. In such a document there would be phrases and words and descriptions which would convey but blurred impressions at first sight. However, as the road was left behind, the directions would gradually unfold themselves and be their own evidence and interpretation. Somewhat in the same way the deposit of Sacred Books has come down to us in the present century with certain tutelary formulas of supernatural origin.

We are told that the Sacred Books are inspired; that God is their Author; that they are inspired

in all their parts, and that they were written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. No greater contradiction could well be imagined than that between these opinions and what we have previously stated. The rationalistic hypothesis will go the length of considering the Bible sublime ; Catholic tradition holds it to be supernatural.

To this great struggle between tradition and criticism the great Thomistic school of theology could not long remain a passive witness. Though somewhat fallen from its old prestige, and shorn of the crown of doctors which had never failed it since the thirteenth century, the school of St. Thomas could still pride itself, even in the beginning of the present century, on men of solid worth, whose grasp of the deep problems of modern thought did not always issue in pamphlets or books. It may be that the atmosphere of the Angel of the Schools is of such restfulness and certainty that only a call of duty will prick a thorough Thomist into active conflict with error. How often, from a like reason, have Catholics to plead guilty to that inertia which the very certainty of their faith, in contrast with the fluctuations of private judgment, has brought about. In kindred matter and from a like cause the school of St. Thomas in our own days felt, perhaps, in a manner yielded to the

temptation of despising the efforts of unguided criticism to spell out the mysteries of the Sacred Books. However, this time of restraint has passed. Within the past few years the school has roused itself, producing a series of contributions to modern thought, to the surprise of those who had asked themselves, could the dry bones of scholasticism live again? As there is much to learn from the chronological point of view, we subjoin the following brief list of works and authors from which we shall draw our conclusions:

1884. CARD. ZIGLIARA, O.P.—"Propaedeutica ad Sacram Theologiam."

1886. PÈRE DUMMERMUTH, O.P. — "Sanctus Thomas et Doctrina Praemotionis Physicae."

1895. PÈRE PÈGUES, O.P.—"Une Pensée de Saint Thomas sur l'Inspiration Scripturaire;" *Revue Thomiste*, March.

1895–1898. *Revue Biblique:* PÈRE LAGRANGE, O.P.—A series of articles occasioned by P. Pègues' article on Inspiration.

Biblical criticism having made the documentary thesis fairly certain, Cardinal Zigliara, in his *Propaedeutica*, endeavoured to show how this result of modern scholarship could find a place in the traditional theology of the schools and the Church. Few of those who remember the

publication of this work will fail to recall the Cardinal's subtle and luminous analysis of Revelation and Inspiration in the opening chapters of the second book. Later on in his volume, when the vexed question of the documentary thesis came up for examination, the results of this second book were made apparent in the follow-exegetical principles:

"In the forementioned documentary hypothesis, it must be borne in mind that—

"1. The acceptation of the contents of these documents, *inasmuch as they are*, *i.e.* as regards their existence, accrued to Moses by natural means. . . . Consequently, on the part of the acceptation there was no revelation.

"2. But the contents of these documents, inasmuch as they are true, *i.e. as regards the judgment* on what is accepted, is not to be considered a judgment of a human kind, which is liable to error; for Moses was infallible in judgment with divine infallibility, and hence was divinely inspired with what was a revelation as regards the judgment."[1]

The Cardinal here lays down what we may

[1] "In hypothesi ergo praefata documentorum dicendum est quod: 1° Acceptio eorum quae in illis documentis continebantur *quia erant*, seu quantum ad existentiam fuit in Moyse per viam naturalem. . . . Consequenter ex parte acceptorum non fuit *revelatio*. 2° Ea autem quae in ipsis documentis continebantur quantum ad *quia erant vera*, seu quoad *judicium de acceptis*, non

term, for convenience sake, the theology of inspiration.

Soon afterwards, the same subject was indirectly viewed from the psychological standpoint by the Louvain professor, Père Dummermuth. An endeavour having been made to break the intellectual continuity of St. Thomas and his school on the question of Efficient Premotion, Père Dummermuth threw the whole weight of his painstaking and accurate mind into the struggle. For the moment it is pleasant to be able to pass by the domestic dispute as to whether the intellectual continuity still rests with the historic followers of St. Thomas, or whether it has gone elsewhere. Moreover, there is no urgent need to maintain that, in the opinion of St. Thomas and his school, God is the first, antecedent, efficient cause of all beings and of all acts. The bulky volume of the Louvain professor turned the attention of many to the thought that God's agency is not to be conceived of as an additional or concomitant efficiency ; but that He is all in all, even when in their own created order secondary causes are all and all sufficient. To many of us there has come a kind of revelation on hearing for the first time that a successful

est dicendum humano more judicium, cui falsum subesse potest ; sed Moyses fuit in judicando infallibilis infallibilitate divina, et ideo divinitus inspiratus, inspiratione quae est revelatio ex parte judicii." —*Propaedeutica*, Lib. 3, c. 9, § 4.

human life consists in praying as if everything depended on God, and working as if everything depended on ourselves. But St. Thomas would have altered the structure of this maxim, making it read: "Pray, *because* everything depends on God, and work, *because* everything depends on yourselves." Père Dummermuth's book, whatever else it did or failed to do, brought a few theologians to ponder over the text: "The same effect is not to be attributed to the natural cause and the divine agency as if it were partly from God and partly from the natural cause. On the contrary, it is *wholly from both*, but in a different manner; even as the same effect is wholly attributed to the instrument, and wholly to the principal cause."[1]

It remained for a French theologian to unite these psychological and theological doctrines. In the *Revue Thomiste* for March, 1895, appeared an article entitled "Une Pensée de Saint Thomas sur l'Inspiration Scripturaire," with the signature "J. M. Pègues." Nowhere throughout the article does the writer explicitly mention the names of Cardinal Zigliara or of Père Dummermuth; yet their teaching, derived in both cases from their

[1] "Non sic idem effectus causae naturali et divinae virtuti attribuitur quasi partim a Deo et partim a naturali agente fiat; sed totus ab utroque secundum alium modum, sicut idem effectus totus attribuitur instrumento et principali agenti etiam totus."—*Contra Gent.*, III., 70.

common master, St. Thomas, is the basis of Père Pègues' exegesis. It was easy for him to take up the question of literal and sentential inspiration, and in the light of Cardinal Zigliara's recent work show how the famous school dispute rested primarily on the confusion of revelation with inspiration. "Dieu n'a pas eu, pour qu'il soit dit l'auteur de tout dans l'Écriture, à donner surnaturellement aux écrivains sacrés toutes les pensées et tous les mots. Ce serait mal entendre l'inspiration scripturaire. Ce serait la confondre avec ce que saint Thomas appelle la prophétie proprement dite,"[1] that is, revelation. On the other hand, how much is made clear by the psychological principles borrowed by Père Dummermuth from St. Thomas: "Pour que ce soit 'comme il est écrit' par Dieu même, il faut et il suffit que pas un mot, pas un iota, pas un accent, pas une expression—rien n'ait été mis, n'ait été écrit sur le papyrus ou les tablettes autrement que sous la motion scripturaire de Dieu. . . . Mais s'il n'est absolument rien, dans l'Écriture, que nous ayons voulu soustraire à l'action et, par suite, à l'autorité de Dieu, il n'est rien aussi que nous ayons reconnu avoir été produit dans cet effet, si ce n'est pas l'action propre de l'instrument."[2] Henceforth inspiration is not so much verbal or sentential as total, extending to every

[1] P. 107. [2] Pp. 109, 110.

item of Sacred Scripture, without lessening its human authorship, even as the divine motion, whether of natural efficiency or of grace, reaches from end to end without damaging or lessening the human efficiency from which human actions immediately flow.

One more step remained to be taken to give a sense of completeness to the doctrine of St. Thomas; and it was taken by Père Lagrange in a series of articles published in the *Revue Biblique* from 1895 to 1898. The three above-mentioned exponents of Thomistic doctrine were above all else theologians. Père Lagrange was dominantly a Biblical scholar. He had passed through the training of the *Summa* and had tasted its breadth and depth; yet he was and still is exegist rather than theologian. The opinions of Père Pègues gave him the thought of applying the principles of St. Thomas to some of the great difficulties of the Bible. His predecessors had laid down abstract laws. Critics, however, awaited something more than academic generalities. Whilst a theory remains in the lecture-room it is unassailable, or what is much the same, unassailed. The only test of its strength and utility is to bring it into contact with the concrete Biblical difficulties which are driving critics from faith to a denial of all revelation. And it is to the honour of

Père Lagrange that, in a reverent yet progressive spirit, he has attempted to reconcile Thomistic theology and the traditions of the Church with the latest products of sound Biblical criticism.

To appreciate fully the position he and other Thomists take up, we must presuppose the psychology and theology of the Master. Men who come unprepared with this *apparatus biblicus* are not unlikely to give our deductions a hard name, calling them subtleties; perhaps going further and presuming to fix upon them a more un-Catholic note. And indeed, until the somewhat difficult philosophy of St. Thomas is made our own, any scientific account of the phenomena of inspiration must appear incomprehensible and almost incredible.

Speaking generally, scholastics have assumed that there are three kinds of cognoscitive faculties in man: (*a*) five External Senses; (*b*) four Internal Senses; (*c*) one Understanding or Reason. All three faculties have apprehensions. The intellect alone has judgments. Apprehension of objects takes place through images or species in the faculty. There are thus three kinds of species: (*a*) Species in the external senses; (*b*) Species in the internal senses; (*c*) Species in the understanding (intellectual species). A judgment is the comparison between

two intellectual species. To make a judgment the intellect requires in itself a certain disposition or fitness which scholastics call *intelligible lumen*, intellectual light.[1] Hence God can infuse (1) *species* into internal sense, intellect; (2) *light* into the intellect.

We may now begin to distinguish between revelation and inspiration. It is the doctrine of St. Thomas that revelation is the manifestation of some naturally unknowable truth. We conclude that revelation is the infusion of supernatural species. Inspiration, as regards its action on the cognoscitive faculties, is the infusion of light. We can at once see that the opinion which accredited God with verbal or sentential inspiration really accredited Him with the revelation of words and sentences. It was not inspiration, but revelation.

Again, inspiration is not necessarily self-conscious. It is a subjective light. Consciousness reveals interior acts. The existence of faculties, habits, dispositions, is made known by reflection. We are not conscious of our intellect, of our good disposition, of meekness, of our virtues of faith, hope, and charity. We can conclude that they exist from the evidence of their effects. But this is to reason, not to intuite immediately. St. Thomas lays it down most em-

[1] *Cf.* Light of Reason, Light of Faith, Light of Glory.

phatically that an inspired author need not be conscious that the Holy Ghost is moving him.[1]

Add to this that inspiration may be afforded in order to certify purely natural knowledge. St. Thomas has explained this with a skill and completeness which is the more remarkable as his age was not one of critical Biblical study. He distinguishes between the hagiographer who has been granted inspiration and the prophet who has received a revelation. The prophet, being a partaker of a divine truth through revelation, *i.e.* an infusion of supernatural species representing a supernatural object, speaks in God's name. "Thus saith the Lord" is the prophetic formula. The inspired writers, on the other hand, speak most frequently of knowledge acquired by human industry, though with the aid of divine light, of which they may, however, be unconscious. Hence they speak not in the person of God, but in their own person.[2]

It was easy to take a step forward to apply this to the two objects of special attack by the critics, historical and scientific facts. St. Thomas had already taken the step as regards

[1] 2^{a}, 2^{ae}, Qu. 171, art. 5; Qu. 173, art. 4. It needs a revelation to know inspiration. This should serve to bring out the supremacy of the Church.

[2] *Cf.* 2^{a}, 2^{ae}, Qu. 174, art. 2, 3^{m}; Qu. 173, art. 2; Qu. 171, art. 3, 2^{m}.

statements having a scientific relation, in his treatise on the Hexameron. There he had no hesitation in solving difficulties by maintaining that the inspired writer sometimes followed appearances. Though the literal meaning of the phrase "the sun stood still" is untrue, if separated from the context and intention of the writer, yet no untruth was embraced by inspiration. The inspired hagiographer did not *put the phrase forward* as a certainty in its detached literal sense. The same principle had already been applied to prophecies which the event had seemed to disprove.[1] When a prophet had announced a future event which failed to come to pass, his prophecy did not thereby become untrue. What the prophet really announced was that secondary causes were so disposed, that the event foretold would certainly occur unless stayed by divine interference.

But it was to the historical difficulties, and chiefly to the first chapters of Genesis, that Père Lagrange applied the principles of St. Thomas. The exegesis was difficult. Only the authority of such a doctor as St. Thomas could make the way safe. Modern criticism had well-nigh conclusively shown the incorporation of pre-existing documents or traditions into the body of Holy Writ. Moreover, it found similar cos-

[1] 2^a, 2^{ae}, Qu. 171, art. 4.

mogonies in other nations. Rightly or wrongly, it presumed to point out historical error in the pages of the Bible; and these it thought and thinks incompatible with the text of the Councils of Trent and the Vatican, declaring the Bible to be inspired in all its parts. Now, thorough Thomist as he is by training and profession, Père Lagrange holds the total inspiration of Scripture; admits the decision of the Councils of Trent and the Vatican, not by constraint but by conviction, and yet feels that the principles of St. Thomas are wide enough to admit of an understanding between the traditional and the critical view.

To take the case of Genesis. The question is not whether the first chapter is to be taken as a whole, literally or metaphorically. Commentators seem agreed that some phrases or words are to be taken metaphorically; but here, as elsewhere, a wide liberty has always been allowed in the Church. The real question is, what does the inspired writer mean to put forward? Père Lagrange would think it possible, perhaps even probable, that the Biblical Hexameron is not put forward as more than a record of the Hebrew tradition, which, through the course of ages, had been modified accidentally by popular use. We may make this clear by calling attention to another species of Biblical

literature. When a parable, such as Dives and Lazarus, is transmitted to us by an inspired author, it is clearly not put forward as historically true. Whoever would deny inspiration, because neither Dives nor Lazarus could be verified in history, would have missed the whole purpose and essence of Holy Writ. So, too, Père Lagrange would urge, may it not be that the Hexameron is put forward as the current Hebrew tradition, which stands out in contrast with neighbouring traditions by its unmistakable insistence on the fundamental truths of Natural Religion and those supernatural truths which could only come from revelation, viz., the existence of a personal God, the inherent goodness of matter and human nature, the spirituality and creation of the human soul, the mysterious lapse into sin, the need and promise of a Redeemer, and lastly, the doctrine, so much needed in the East, of the natural equality of the two sexes of the human race?

To say that Holy Writ is not inspired, because there is nothing in modern science to countenance the existence, say, of such a serpent as spoke to Eve, is to miss the whole point of the inspired narrative.

Or to take the later historical books. No doubt would seem to exist that their compilers freely consulted the archives, in which were

preserved the public records of national events and the genealogical trees of the various clans of the Hebrew people. When the author of the second book of Machabees published his work, incorporating into it pre-existing documents, are we led to suppose that he *put it forward* as absolutely true and supernaturally guaranteed in every detail? To quote the words of a present author, the Rev. R. Clarke, D.D., " . . . the writer said just what God would have him say, and said it because God moved him to do so. He might then, if they were in place on his lips, make use of current representations of matters of science or current accounts of past events, saying, or leaving it to be understood from the circumstances, that he gave them for what they were worth; or he might make extracts or quotations without thereby in the slightest degree intending to pledge himself to the literal exactitude of what they would convey if taken *au pied de la lettre*." [1]

Nor can we neglect to lay stress upon what we may term the restrictive side of inspiration. In this as in other points it is most nearly akin to infallibility. Now it is one of the most necessary outcomes of an infallible authority in the Church that it *can not put forward* as of faith what is not of faith. Inspiration in the same

[1] *The Weekly Register*, Oct. 28, 1899, 592.

way prevents the inspired writer from putting forward, as objectively and literally true, what was in his days only probable or commonly accepted.

We may here make the obvious distinction between a proposition and its mode. A proposition may be false and its mode true, or *vice versâ.* The proposition "America is an island in the Mediterranean" is untrue. But even as every contingency rests on a necessity, and every relativity on some absolute, so may, nay, must, every untruth rest on a certainty. Thus the following phrase is absolutely certain: "It is untrue that America is an island in the Mediterranean." Again, it may be certain that "some people believe that America is an island in the Mediterranean." To apply this to the inspired books. Take the proposition, "the sun stood still." As it stands detached from all context, it may or may not be scientifically or even absolutely false in its literal sense. But the quasi-modal proposition, "to all appearances," or "it was commonly held that the sun stood still," may be absolutely true. Again, the proposition, "the universe was made in six periods of time," may or may not be absolutely false. But the quasi-modal proposition, "the common tradition holds that the earth was made in six periods of time," may be absolutely true.

Finally, the proposition that "in the eighteenth year of the reign of Jeroboam the son of Nabat, Abiam reigned over Juda" may or may not be objectively inexact. Yet the quasi-modal statement that "history affirms" or "it is historically certain that in the eighteenth year," &c., may be absolutely certain. Now the light of divine inspiration ensures the hagiographer's certitude of what is objectively certain. We may argue from his certitude to the objective certainty. If he is certain of the mode of a proposition, then the mode is objectively certain. But in this case it would be a fallacy to argue from the certainty of the mode to the certainty of the proposition, from the quality of the *dictum* to the quality of the *res*.

It is to this stage of development that the doctrine of St. Thomas has been brought by his disciples. A step still remains to be made before the reconciliation of tradition with criticism may be said to have taken place. Those who have followed the theological expansion of traditional principles may have remarked certain tendencies to hesitate and halt, as if the way were not clear. This is manifest in the traditional definition of inspiration, which has remained for so long without a fuller statement of its content. The text-books we used when we were beginning our Scripture course defined inspiration to be "a motion of the Holy Ghost, enlightening the

understanding and exciting the will of the sacred scribe to write in such a manner that the Holy Ghost becomes the principal author of the Sacred Books." A step was taken when Cardinal Zigliara and others pointed out that the essential outcome of this enlightenment of the mind is a judgment. But what this judgment is, and what the intention, which is the outcome of God's action on the will, still remains without an adequate explanation. And it is to the task of clearing up this last difficulty that we now set ourselves. We do not pretend to have borrowed it from any author. As far as we can, we shall try to deduce it from exegetical facts, leaving it to Biblical scholars to accept or reject our attempted solution.

We begin by laying stress on the difference between revelation and inspiration. It is the opinion of St. Thomas that a prophet is not necessarily a hagiographer, nor is a hagiographer necessarily a prophet. Sometimes the two offices are combined, as in St. John, the inspired prophet of the Apocalypse. Sometimes they would seem to be distinct, as in the case of St. Luke. The Book of Isaias is not inspired merely because the author of its discourses was a prophet, but because its compiler was inspired, whether he was one and the same person as the prophet, or another who was not a prophet.

The next principle to be realised is that inspiration presupposes revelation. Inspiration may be called the guardian of revelation. Its most kindred divine gift is infallibility, by which the divine and supernatural deposit of faith is safeguarded to all time. We may, thus, go on to conclude that in a certain sense *ens revelatum*, or divine revelation, is the formal object of inspiration. The inspired writer is thus moved by God to apprehend the presence of a revelation and to intend to transmit the revelation by writing.

To make this clearer we have only to reflect that in point of fact prophecy is hardly ever recognised until after its fulfilment. This need call for no surprise. For what is the aim of prophecy except to bring conviction to others on the forecast taking effect? In such an event it may well be recognised that other mysterious words are prophetic utterances which the course of time will decipher. But on the whole, and speaking formally, prophecy is clear on its fulfilment, seeing that its aim was to carry conviction by being fulfilled. It was one of the trials of the prophets that they enounced a doom which was long in coming. How loudly they complain to God that their warnings fall on unheeding ears! Jer. xx. 7: "Thou hast deceived me, O Lord, and I am deceived; Thou hast been stronger

than I, and Thou hast prevailed. I am become a laughing-stock all the day. All scoff at me. 8. For I am speaking now this long time crying out against iniquity, and I often proclaim devastation; and 'the Word of the Lord' is made a reproach to me and a derision all the day. 9. Then I said I will not make mention of them, nor speak any more in His name; and there came in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was wearied, not being able to bear it."

Let us endeavour to apply this to the prophetical, historical, moral, and, if I may be allowed the word, liturgical books.

If it is evident that prophecy was not generally recognised until after its fulfilment, we can account for the authentic re-editing of the prophetic discourses long after the prophet's death. The prophecies of Isaias, for example, were disbelieved in his day. Again and again he threatened the Jews with captivity, but they thanked him with jeers. However, his words came true at last. In the day of exile we might well conceive that they recognised the truth of the holy man's warnings. To make amends for their past foolishness, as well as to keep his wise counsels ever before their thoughts, they brought their record of his sayings and sermons into one. Whoever, then, enlightened and moved by God, *judged*

these discourses to contain a revelation, and *intended* to transmit this revelation by writing, was inspired. We must not be taken to mean that any writer is inspired who recognises a revelation and intends to transmit it; otherwise, we should find it difficult to deny inspiration to all subsequent editors of the sacred books. But inspiration, when granted, would run in these grooves. The inspired author would necessarily judge something to be a revelation, and would intend to transmit it.

The application to the historical books is slightly more difficult. But we must bear in mind the supernatural character of the Jewish people. Though a natural view of their history would seem adequate to the events, yet it does not exclude a supernatural account. This branch of the Semitic race was the recipient of a preferential action on the part of Divine Providence, which gives their history a distinct character. From a remote past they were conscious of a divine choice and guidance leading them to a future of great import to the whole world. Their successes, their defeats, their changes of government, the ebb and flow of their religious fervour, all seemed to bring out into clearer relief the import of the mysterious promises handed down in their holy books and traditions. When national affairs were at their darkest,

scribes would arise to lift up the hopes of the weak daughters of Israel by bringing to men's minds the glorious, theocratic past. From the public records of the great city or of the temple, the scribe would seek out the official narrations of past events or the official tribal genealogies in order to show God's supernatural dealings with His chosen people. Now, to be aware of the supernatural guidance of God would only have come about directly or indirectly by a revelation. Whoever, then, was guided by God to *judge* this supernatural guidance to exist and to be a revelation, and, by the motion of the Holy Spirit, *intended* to transmit this revelation by writing, was an inspired writer.

Take the concrete case of Ruth. In itself the facts of this charming idyll are, as St. Thomas would say, purely natural, which it needed no supernatural assistance to find out. We may conceive the materials scattered partly in the archives of Jerusalem, partly in the archives of Moab, partly in the local traditions of Bethlehem. Hitherto there are no traces of inspiration. But when David's days have run their course, and his whole life can be scanned in its unity, the prophecy of the Messiah is narrowed and made clearer. The mystic promise can now only be fulfilled by a mighty son of David, who will rule from sea to sea. In the glorification of the

shepherd lad of Bethlehem, Ruth, his Moabite grandparent, becomes a figure of new interest. Mystic promises regarding the Gentile are interpreted in the light of her history. The finger of God is seen in the changeful events of her life, just as God's supernatural dealings were manifest to all in the pillar of smoke and fire. The scribe who, enlightened and moved by God, *judged* that Ruth's life and ancestry of David were a part of the supernatural guidance of the chosen people, and *intended* to transmit the revelation, was inspired.

There is still the question of such a book as Job. We may well suspend our examination of it until commentators have declared it authentically to be historical. In that case its inspiration would probably depend on its being recognised as an example of God's supernatural guidance over souls and over His chosen people.

It is even more difficult to account for and analyse the inspiration of the moral books. Few exegeses are more delicate than to determine which sentiments are religious and which sceptical in certain passages of the Sapiential writings. At other times the directions laid down would seem to be for the guidance of men who were seeking mere worldly success. We may indeed consider such passages metaphorically. We may give them a spiritual meaning. The example of

the saints and doctors of the Church forbids all repudiation of such a method. But the point of greatest difficulty is to determine how such doctrine was inspired in case their author was unconscious, as he might well be, of his inspiration and set his thoughts down in their literal expression. There are two remarks to be made in reply to this difficulty. First, the inspired author may have *judged* that the current proverbial philosophy of his time and nation had some occult influence over their supernatural destinies, and, *intending* to transmit these to posterity, he was inspired. Secondly, he may have judged that these moral dicta sprang out of and safeguarded the Ten Commandments of Jehovah, which his own supernaturally guided people had a mission to preserve and propagate.

We have spoken of the liturgical books, and by these is meant the Psalter. The application of the theory of inspiration is here most difficult. But we may not be far from the solution if we consider that in point of fact these sacred hymns were composed to perpetuate the happy events of the life of David, the ancestor of the Messiah, or of the people from whom the Messiah was to spring. As in previous explanations, we may consider it possible that not the first author of the psalms was inspired; but that inspiration

rested on him who, *judging* that the psalms expressed the sentiments of a supernaturally guided people in their varying fortunes, *intended* to transmit them to posterity.

This view of the principles of inspiration might suggest a fresh consideration of *obiter dicta*. But the subject is one of great delicacy, requiring more than the brief incidental treatment which it would necessarily receive in a paper like the present. However, enough may have been said to make it clear that an *obiter dictum* would have four qualities. It would necessarily be (*a*) inspired ; (*b*) not revealed ; (*c*) not of faith, directly ; (*d*) not untrue in the sense in which it is put forward by the inspired writer.

We may sum up our paper under a few headings :—

1. Inspiration is not Revelation.
2. Revelation is the infusion of species; Inspiration is the infusion of intellectual light.
3. Inspiration need not be self-conscious.
4. Inspiration may be granted for naturally acquired knowledge.
5. Inspiration chiefly regards the formation of a supernatural judgment.
6. Revelation is naturally antecedent to inspiration.
7. Inspiration may be defined as "a divine motion enabling the inspired writer to

judge of a revelation and moving him freely to intend to transmit it" (*i.e.* Revelation).

8. Granted that there were *obiter dicta*, they would not be directly binding on our faith.
9. *Obiter dicta* would be inspired.
10. An *obiter dictum* might be true or false in a literal *detached* sense, in which *it was not put forward* by the inspired writer.
11. No *obiter dictum* could be false in the sense in which it was put forward by the inspired writer.

The theory we have now brought to a close, after a rapid survey, rests on two bases, and bears with it two recommendations. It is psychological; it is theological. The remote source from whence it has been drawn is the scholastic doctrine of the soul's powers and actions, brought into contact with the treatise of the Angelic Doctor,[1] in which he traces the outlines of God's supernatural dealings with man's cognoscitive faculties. Whether the principles we have laid down and the conclusions we have drawn be true or not, they cannot fail to be of interest in these days of unrest, when men, even of good will, are looking about in fear and dread at the difficulties of the Biblical problem. If the manner of treatment is abstruse, what shall we say but that still subtler principles

[1] 2^a, 2^{ae}, Qu. 171–179.

have been left unworked? In these matters of God's delicate dealings with the mind and the will of man, may we not reasonably suspect any theory which professes to make all things clear? We may even learn a useful reserve of mind by the shallowness of our gaze; for surely it would be an unscholarly attitude towards Truth—and the Highest Truth—to turn from an explanation offered to a grave difficulty, merely because, like all great subjects, it requires of us accurate and patient thought.

CARDINAL NEWMAN AND THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

It is not uncommonly held amongst Biblical students that Cardinal Newman considered *obiter dicta* to fall outside the scope of Biblical Inspiration. Of those who believe this to be the Cardinal's opinion, some would frankly sympathise with him, whilst others would be nothing loath to see his theory officially repudiated by the authorities of the Church. But the present writer ventures to think that before any definite opinion is formed either in sympathy with or distrust of the Cardinal's words, it is absolutely necessary to arrive at his true mind.

Two things have to be distinguished at the outset of any inquiry on the subject of Newman's opinion. The first is the reputed fact that Newman held the thesis "*obiter dicta* may be not-inspired"; the second is the mental attitude which a Catholic should take up with regard to such a thesis.

The reputed fact that Newman's thesis regarded

the non-inspiration of *obiter dicta* seems to be sufficiently proved by the article which he published in the *Nineteenth Century* (February, 1884), entitled "On the Inspiration of Scripture," and again by his reply to Professor Healy.[1] The hostility to his opinion manifested in certain quarters is greatly to be traced to the almost reckless way in which certain well-meaning partisans of his have explained his words. When it was claimed that Newman had practically set his seal on a theory which considered the inspired portions of the Bible to be strewn like stray fossils in a bed of uninspired and sometimes inaccurate information, then loyal minds in great numbers took fright. But it had been the fate of the intellectual leader of the Oxford Movement to be attended by a company of disciples who wrought out his principles by a process of relentless logic, whereas he himself conceived logic—"paper-logic" he called it—to be the mere record of that mental growth which is carried on by the whole concrete being. Whilst he was still working out the principles which led him later on to full Catholic faith, he was surrounded by a group of men who cut into the Oxford Movement at an angle. Some of them in the event became

[1] "What is of Obligation for a Catholic to Believe Concerning the Inspiration of the Canonical Scriptures." London: Burns and Oates.

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Catholics. Some, like Froude, gradually lost all responsiveness to dogmatic truth.

The relations of these men with their ruthless reasoning to their leader with his patient thinking cannot better be told than in his own words :—

"Sometimes in what I wrote I went just as far as I saw, and could as little say more, as I could see what is below the horizon; and therefore, when asked as to the consequences of what I had said, had no answer to give. Again, sometimes when I was asked whether certain conclusions did not follow from a certain principle, I might not be able to tell at the moment, especially if the matter were complicated; and for this reason if for no other, because there is a great difference between a conclusion in the abstract and a conclusion in the concrete, and because a conclusion may be modified in fact by a conclusion from some other principle. Or it might so happen that I got simply confused by the very clearness of the logic which was administered to me, and thus gave my sanction to conclusions which really were not mine; . . . And then again, perhaps I did not like to see men scared or scandalised by unfeeling logical inferences, which would not have touched them to the day of their death had they not been made to eat them. . . . I had a great dislike for paper-logic. For myself, it was

not logic that carried me on; as well might one say that the quicksilver in the barometer changes the weather. It is the concrete being that reasons; . . . the whole man moves; paper-logic is but the record of it." [1]

The conclusions which Mivart drew from Newman's premises and published some three years later were sufficiently startling to alarm the loyal. Then, in the event the disciple seemed to stumble at the current tradition and feeling regarding the inspired books. The distressing events which overshadowed the closing months of Mivart's life and cruelly tried his friends, did not tend to quiet those who had rightly or wrongly taken fright. To be fair-minded, however, we should recollect that every thinker is accompanied by a knot of lesser men—logicians for the most part—who take up one of the master's many points of view, insisting upon it with such urgency and with such a divorce from its natural intellectual setting that it becomes one-sided and practically, if not speculatively, untrue. And thus we are led to own that neither the best nor the safest way to a true view of Newman's opinion is to be found in the commentaries of men whose chief claim to be called his followers is, that they "administered to him such clearness of paper-logic that he seemed to sanction con-

[1] *Apologia*, Pt. VI., p. 285. London, 1864.

clusions which really were not his," and were not really contained in his premises.

To discover his true mind, we must put ourselves in his place and time, and, as far as the lesser may comprehend or understand the greater, we must take in the complete circuit of his intellectual principles. To great minds all knowledge is a theory of knowledge. Their thoughts and experience stand under principles, and these again under a principle. All they know is organically one. They unify knowledge automatically, almost unconsciously, which is the same as saying that for them to know anything is to have a theory of their knowledge.

If this makes them easy to be appreciated and esteemed, it also makes them hard to be understood. The common run of men find great problems easy or simple because they take a partial view and never discern the difficulty. Great minds find the greatest problems simple, because they view things as a whole and are expectant of difficulties. Their simplicity is that of a bird's-eye view, not that of a study in detail. If they are obliged to explain what is simple to them, they confuse by the very profusion of their thought. Hardly a statement can be made without limitations and qualifications. The readier sort of writers are likely to consider their style diffuse and subtle, merely because language is an

imperfect vehicle of their thought. Newman was just one of those great minds who take in the whole world, as it were, in a glance. But when he sought to tell what he saw, it was at the risk of that *scandalum pusillorum* which no one dreaded and avoided more than he. Plain, blunt writers of the stamp of Kingsley who had never been as far as Newman into the bowels of thought, could hardly fail to misunderstand him. To them he was a subtle, cunning mind that wrapped thoughts in such an elaborate trousseau of words that at length they became ambiguities and even contradictions; the fact being that Newman and such as he are so loyal to the Truth which they see as a whole, yet which they do not wholly see, that their efforts to state it as it is make them seem to state it as it is not.

It was characteristic of Newman's thoroughness that the short paper which he published in the *Nineteenth Century* was a twelvemonth in the making. He could do nothing merely well that was capable of being done better. A passage in the article gives us a reason for his thoroughness in writing, once he had set his mind on putting his thoughts on paper.

"For myself I have no call or wish at all to write in behalf of such persons as think it a 'love of truth to have no love of the brethren.' I am indeed desirous of investigating for its own sake

the limit of free thought consistently with the claims upon us of Holy Scripture; still my especial interest in the inquiry is from my desire to assist those religious sons of the Church who are engaged in Biblical criticism and its attendant studies, and have a conscientious fear of the rule of faith; men who wish to ascertain how far their religion puts them under obligations and restrictions in their reasonings and inferences on such subjects, what conclusions may or may not be held without interfering with that internal assent which they are bound to give if they would be Catholics, to the written Word of God. I do but contemplate the inward peace of religious Catholics in their own persons."[1]

Far from viewing his article as a disturbing phenomenon to the little ones of Christ, he took a twelvemonth from the closing years of his life in order to set down a few principles which might steady those who had no power to reconcile the Old learning with the New, the dicta of faith with the conclusions of sound criticism. He must have felt deeply, or he would not have laboured to give to the weak ones this extraordinary effort of a man in his eighty-fourth year.

The point he set himself to establish was that

[1] *Nineteenth Century*, p. 287.

there may be (he does not say *must* be) phrases or statements in the Sacred Scripture which are not necessarily *de Fide*, or, as he puts it, not necessarily "binding on our faith."[1] The question of error or falsehood does not come before him. Thus he writes :—

"And next, why does he [Professor Healy] always associate an *obiter dictum* with the notion of error, or even, as he himself expresses himself, with 'falsehood'? At least what right has he to attribute such an association to me? I have implied no such thing. I very much doubt if I have even once used the word 'error' in connection with the phrase *obiter dictum*, though (as I shall show directly) no harm follows if I have. I have given my own sense of the word when I parallel it to such instances of it as occur in a question of dogma. Does the professor mean to say that such a dictum is necessarily false when it occurs in a dogmatic document? No,—it is merely unauthoritative."[2]

Special attention must be paid to this fact. It is the aim of the Cardinal to establish the possibility of there being phrases or statements in the Bible which are not *de Fide*. He instances St. Paul's reference to "the cloak which he left at Troas with Carpus." He would ask: Is it *de*

[1] "What is of Obligation," &c., p. 16.
[2] Ibid., pp. 14, 15.

Fide, *i.e.* binding on our faith, that St. Paul left his cloak at Troas with Carpus? To put it in his own forcible yet reverent way:—

"Would St. Timothy, to whom he wrote, think this an infallible utterance? And supposing it had been discovered, on most plausible evidence, that the Apostle left his cloak with Eutychus, not with Carpus, would Timothy, would Catholics now, make themselves unhappy, because St. Paul had committed what the professor calls a '*falsehood*'? . . . I fear seeming to use light words on a sacred subject; but I must ask, is St. Paul's request to Timothy about his *penula* 'the Word'? . . . Could St. Paul say, 'Thus saith the Lord, send the penula,'" &c., &c.[1]

Here it will be remarked that it seems to be the mind and purpose of the Cardinal that it is of little consequence whether St. Paul's reference to the penula is true or false. What does matter is its relation to the deposit of faith. Is it part of the deposit of faith that St. Paul's cloak remained at Troas with Carpus? And it is just this one point that the Cardinal considers in his article.

To go on a step further in our consideration of the circumstances in which Cardinal Newman wrote, we must confess that he nowhere shows himself acquainted with the comparatively recent

[1] "What is of Obligation," p. 16.

distinction between Inspiration and Revelation. Catholic exegetists have been drawing the distinction with increasing accuracy during the past few years. Foremost, perhaps, amongst these have been the writers in the *Revue Biblique.* Roughly speaking, revelation is the manifestation of a supernatural truth, *i.e.* of a truth which the natural thinking powers of man could not discover. Thus the doctrines of the Trinity, Original Sin, the Incarnation, the Ascension, the Sacramental System, could never be discovered by natural thought. They are the subject-matter of Divine Revelation alone. Again, future contingent events, such as are foreseen by prophets, can only be known by Revelation. The human mind has not the power to discover them, but merely to assent to them when they are made known by the First Reason.

Inspiration, on the other hand, and especially hagiographic inspiration, is not a Divine manifestation of supernatural truth. It does not so much regard objective facts or statements as subjective light.[1] Thus the man who receives a Divine revelation is commonly called a *prophet;*

[1] No term is more characteristic of St. Thomas and his followers than *Lumen.* When used by them in connection with the act of knowledge, it signifies the subjective disposition of the cognoscitive faculty. They employ the expressive phrase *Lumen Rationis* to signify the living power of reasoning; *Lumen Fidei*, to signify the living power of believing.

though the term *prophet* is somewhat narrowly restricted to signify the man who receives a revelation of future events undiscoverable by mere natural reasoning. The distinction has no less authority and parentage than St. Thomas,[1] who makes the following acute and weighty remarks: "But if the intellectual light is infused into any one, not in order to understand anything supernatural, but in order to judge, according to the certainty of divine truth, of truths which may be known by reason, such intellectual prophecy" (*i.e.* inspiration) "is inferior to that which has an imaginative vision leading to supernatural truth" (*i.e.* revelation, strictly so-called). "Those who have this revelation are called prophets. Hence they spoke in the person of God, saying to the people, 'Thus saith the Lord:' whereas the hagiographers did otherwise, since many of them for the most part spoke of things which could be known by reason, and hence" (spoke) "not in the person of God, but in their own person." Cardinal Newman nowhere shows his acquaintance with this more recent distinction. Indeed he clearly confuses the two notions. He writes in his first article: "There is one instance of Divine Inspiration without a human medium: the Decalogue was written by the very finger of

[1] 2^{a}, 2^{ae}, Qu. 174, art. 2, ad. 3.

God" (p. 192). But this is a Revelation. Again, when he quotes the words of Sara, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son"—the words of Abraham, "God will provide"—the words of the Architriclinus, that they "had kept the good wine till now"—the words of the prophet Osee, "I have called my son out of Egypt"—it is a question of Revelation; not, strictly speaking, of hagiographic Inspiration. So, too, when he asks whether St. Paul could say, "Thus saith the Lord, Send the penula," St. Thomas would have reassured him by reminding him that this formula belongs to the prophets, not to the hagiographers or theopneusts, and that it betokens Revelation, not Inspiration.

In suggesting that Cardinal Newman had no accurate knowledge of this distinction, I am only venturing to say that he was not acquainted with what was chiefly developed after his death, or at least after his articles on Inspiration. In his time Inspiration was loosely used to signify the Scriptural *charisma*. But since his time two elements have been detected in this supernatural endowment:—

1. Revelation, a supernatural manifestation of truth; and
2. Inspiration, a supernatural light and impulse.

We may represent this schematically :—

I = Inspiration generically taken ;
I′ = Inspiration strictly taken ;
R = Revelation.

Thus :—

To Newman's mind there was but one acceptance of Inspiration, which made it more or less identical with Revelation. He knew *I*; but he did not know *I′*. Now, since *I* includes *R*, he sometimes makes use of the word Inspiration (*I*, not *I′*) where he means Revelation (*R*), as we have shown above.

But a most strange phenomenon occurs in his writing. Although he has every opportunity, nay inducement, to do so, *he never once defines an obiter dictum in terms of Inspiration.* There are two passages where he may be said to define an *obiter dictum* in his second article. First, "by *obiter dicta* being meant phrases, clauses, or sentences in Scripture about matters of mere fact, which, as not relating to faith and morals, may without violence be referred to the human element in its composition" (p. 14). Again, "*obiter dictum* means, as I understand it, a phrase which, whether a statement of literal fact or not, is not

from the circumstances binding on our faith" (p. 15).

These definitions are likely to be classical. Newman's clear mind saw instinctively that he could not define an *obiter dictum* as a phrase or statement which is not inspired. His definition is: An *obiter dictum* is a statement not *de Fide*.

Now, had he thought it out, he would have seen that it is Revelation which makes a statement *de Fide*. What cannot be known by reason must be held by faith; and what cannot be discovered by us must be revealed to us, if we are to hold it at all. That he had all the principles for making the further distinction we may well suppose from passages here and there in his articles. He writes in the *Nineteenth Century*:—

"The matters which" [the Church] "can oblige us to accept with an internal assent are the matters contained in that *Revelation*[1] of Truth, written or unwritten, which came to the world from our Lord and His Apostles; and this claim on our faith in her decisions as to the matter of *that Revelation* rests on her being the divinely appointed representative of the Apostles and the expounder of their words; so that whatever she categorically delivers about their formal

[1] Italics are mine.

acts, or their writings or their teaching, is an Apostolic deliverance. I repeat, the only sense in which the Church insists on any statement, Biblical or other, *the only reason of her so insisting is that the statement is part of the original Revelation*, and therefore must be unconditionally accepted—else that Revelation is not, as a revelation, accepted at all" (p. 186).

Here the Cardinal verges on the true lines of a definite solution of the difficulty. He is kept back from saying the last word upon the subject by his primary and indefinite meaning of Inspiration.

That the Cardinal was constrained by the necessities of his terminology to issue in something approaching ambiguity need not be a matter of surprise. We find him writing: "As to the authority of Scripture, we hold it to be in all matters of faith and morals divinely inspired throughout . . . But while the Councils, as has been shown, lay down so emphatically the inspiration of Scripture in respect to 'faith and morals,' it is remarkable that they do not say a word directly as to its inspiration in matters of fact. *Yet are we therefore to conclude that the record of facts in Scripture does not come under the guarantee of its inspiration? We are not so to conclude.*"[1] Contrast this with the Cardinal's

[1] P. 189. The italics are mine.

definition of an *obiter dictum* as "a phrase or sentence which is not binding on our faith."[1]

The Sacred Scripture is inspired throughout (the Vatican Council says "libros integros cum omnibus suis partibus"); yet there may be phrases or statements which are not of faith. This is, if not a contradiction, at least an ambiguity. It is well-nigh indisputable that a phrase or statement is a "pars"; hence, according to the Vatican Council, it must be inspired. How then comes it to be not *de Fide*, not binding on our faith? Newman seems to feel the difficulty, and replies that the word "pars" regards the Bible quantitatively, whereas we may consider the Bible qualitatively. To this he adds, "In a word, Inspiration of Scripture *in omnibus suis partibus* is one thing; *in omnibus rebus* is another" (p. 23). Yet of course Newman could not have forgotten that a "phrase or statement" was a "pars" rather than a "res."

It is, then, remarkable that the Cardinal has never once defined an *obiter dictum* in terms of Inspiration. His naturally reverential mind may have felt an instinctive mistrust of a definition which seemed in any way to go behind an infallible decision of a General Council. And thus by the dread of appearing to minimise an authoritative decree he was led to give a definition

[1] "What is of Obligation," &c., p. 16.

which is likely to prove a *locus classicus* for all students of the theology of Biblical exegesis.

What, then, did Newman do ? He defined an *obiter dictum* in terms of Revelation. "*Obiter dictum* means, as I understand it, a phrase or sentence which, whether a statement of literal fact or not, is *not* from the circumstances *binding on our faith*" (p. 15). In other words, an *obiter dictum* is not revealed. There is no question of its Inspiration ; as modern Biblical theologians now understand Inspiration in contradistinction to Revelation. Newman merely wishes to say with St. Thomas that there are certain historical scientific facts in the Sacred Scriptures which were naturally known to the hagiographers without any supernatural Revelation. They were natural knowledge. Hence they need not (could not ?) be *de Fide.*

But it may be urged that the very words of the Cardinal take away the grounds of what we have been maintaining. To take some of the headings of the Cardinal's article : "Inspiration in matters of Historical Fact ; *Obiter Dicta* viewed relatively to Inspiration ; Restrictions upon Inspiration ; Plenary and Permanent Inspiration ; Inspiration as Co-ordinate with Error." Surely, it will be said, it is the very mind and aim of the writer of the above phrases to consider *obiter dicta* as a restriction on In-

spiration. In reply to this I distinguish in form: Cardinal Newman views *obiter dicta* as a restriction on

Inspiration { generically taken and inclusive of Revelation. Yes.
strictly taken and exclusively of Revelation. No.

Obiter dicta are a restriction of *I*, but not of *I'*.[1] To put the matter in another way, Newman merely means to say that *obiter dicta* are *not revealed.*

Of course it may well be granted that the Cardinal's two articles are not free from ambiguities. He seems to have felt this himself, when he wrote: "Now I observe, first, that any statement about the Inspiration of Scripture is far too serious a matter in its bearings to be treated carelessly; and consequently the Professor explains, while he complains of, my 'raising the question' of *obiter dicta* 'and not answering it.' Of course; I do not go further in my Essay than saying 'There does not seem any serious difficulty in admitting' that they are to be found in Scripture. Why is not that enough for a cautious man to say?"[2]

He would seem to have felt that his article

[1] *Cf.* p. 43, above.
[2] "What is of Obligation," &c., p. 14.

had raised questions without laying them; had brought about doubts without supplanting them by certitude. But he could hardly have done otherwise. His thoughts, as deep as they were true, had to be conveyed through a word-medium which from the nature of the case was ambiguous. No clear distinction had yet obtained between Inspiration and Revelation. It was Napoleon manœuvring with a handful of raw recruits, William Tell shooting with a bent arrow.

This view of the Cardinal's words makes it easy to reconcile his opinion with a passage in the famous Encyclical of Leo XIII., *Providentissimus Deus:* "But it is absolutely wrong and forbidden, either to *narrow Inspiration to certain parts* only of Holy Scripture, or to admit that the sacred writer has erred. For the system of those who, in order to rid themselves of these difficulties, do not hesitate to concede that *Divine Inspiration regards the things of faith and morals, and nothing beyond,* because (as they wrongly think), in a question of the truth or falsehood of a passage, we should consider not so much what God has said as the reason and purpose which He had in mind in saying it—this system cannot be tolerated."

Here the word Inspiration is taken strictly, as *I'*. The Encyclical does not affirm that every

historical and scientific phrase or statement in its literal sense is directly *de Fide*, *i.e. divinely revealed.* Is it not true to say in this connection that the Bible is not the Divine Revelation, but contains Divine Revelation, if we hold, together with St. Thomas, that there are certain facts which could be known by reason and could yet be covered by Divine Inspiration?

If the view we have put forward be taken to represent the true mind of Cardinal Newman, much if not all the timidity that is felt for his words would become superfluous. The ultimate decision as to the limits of Inspiration as well as of the objective force of Newman's words rests with the Church. The present writer finds no difficulty in holding the Church to be infallible in direct matters of faith and morals and in dogmatic facts which relate to faith and morals immediately. He holds it necessary for her guardianship of the deposit of faith to be able to define the θεοτόκος and to condemn the *Augustinus* of Jansenius, or to approve, if need be, Cardinal Newman's masterly paper on the Inspiration of Scripture.

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS ON THE HEXAMERON

In the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa*, between the treatise on the Angels and that on Man, lies St. Thomas' treatise on the Hexameron. With its ten short questions subdivided into a scanty twenty-nine articles, it holds a position of some inferiority in a volume beginning with *De Deo Uno et Trino* and drawing to a close in the sublime thoughts of God's Providence over His creatures. At first sight it has little to recommend it to the approval of such as make theology their life's work. Professors of Dogma, if they have the heart to peer into it, are liable to be disappointed with the rawness of its mediæval physics and the sense of uncertainty that everywhere overhangs its almost mysterious pages.

Yet it may be questioned whether any other treatise has more serviceable truths to teach the theologian whose lot is cast in the twentieth century. It is true, of course, that unlike the metaphysical unchangeableness of the Unity and

Trinity of God, and, indeed, of the Sacramental system, the physical theories that underlie the *Summa's* view of creation have passed up into broader and more scientific conceptions of the universe. So, whilst carrying the reader's mind back to St. Thomas and the thirteenth century, we have no intention of leading a forlorn hope against modern science that has followed upon and supplanted the unformed science of the Middle Ages. Our aim is more modest. We venture to think that in the manner in which St. Thomas employed the physical science of his age there are useful lessons for all time. Thus we shall hope to make it clear by extracts from St. Thomas that his mind was one of great philosophic reserve and breadth, and that on the important subject of Biblical Criticism he contrived to give Science an important and natural sphere of action.

To set a true value upon the spirit in which St. Thomas dealt with the perplexed questions of the Hexameron, we must try to estimate the intellectual atmosphere in which he found himself. Europe in his days was still emerging from the ignorance and rudeness of barbaric times. The treasures of Oriental, Greek, and Latin thought were given over to the newly awakened intellectual activity to be criticised, co-ordinated, systematised. With us moderns,

observation and reflection are the chief instruments in cultivating the domain of knowledge. They trusted to pure reasoning and took their premises on faith from tradition—and often from a lively imagination. They were subjected to two superstitions: a superstitious reverence for the wisdom of the ancients, and, contrariwise, a superstitious confidence in the power of pure reason to solve all problems with the aid of abstract principles and the truths of faith. Thus, reason and imagination uncorrected by observation, as with us, of the facts, physical and historical, of the universe, were apt to run riot; but with the better sort took the general drift of unifying and arranging the mass of matter derived from antiquity, of filling up its gaps; hence arose the Scholastic Philosophy and Theology.

Amongst the few who, together with the instinct of order and system, possessed a philosophic insight into the heart of things, St. Thomas is the chief; for conclusive evidence of which fact we need go no further than the ten brief questions "De Opere Sex Dierum."

The question he sets himself to solve is the production of the universe revealed to man by his outward senses. Whoever felt bold enough to attempt the answer found himself supplied

with the mysterious traditions of the Hebrew races and the ingenious guess-work of existing science. Moreover, the Biblical account of the world's beginning had gathered round itself the views and theories of Christian doctors, even as the literature of philosophy had expanded under the many commentators of the masters of thought. What first strikes us in the work of St. Thomas is the masterly summary he makes of the various Christian explanations of the Hexameron. The various schools of interpretation, which modern commentators have named Concordistic, Idealistic, Literal, and Visionary, are grouped by St. Thomas under the two theories, Concordistic and Visionary, proposed by St. Basil and St. Augustine respectively. To some it may seem that his reason for passing over the remaining theories lay in his scanty knowledge of Patrology. But it will probably appear to students of the *Summa*, who know his grasp of the Fathers, that his employment of two theories alone is a deliberate choice. In considering the opinions of St. Basil and St. Augustine alone, he may indeed lay himself open to the charge of having failed to deal with some points of no great weight in solving the essential question. But no one can accuse him of minimising the peculiar difficulties of the Mosaic account of Creation. It may be useful

to bring forward St. Thomas' summary of the two great theories.[1]

"In reply be it said that in this question Augustine differs from other expositors. For Augustine is of opinion (*Gen. ad litt.* 4, c. 22; et *Civ. Dei*, 12, c. 9) that all the so-called days are one day put forward in seven ways. But others think that they were seven distinct days, and not one only.

"Now these two opinions, if *referred to the exposition of the letter of Genesis*, are widely divergent. For, according to Augustine, by a day is meant the knowledge of the angelic mind, so that the first day is the knowledge of the first divine work, and the second day the knowledge of the second divine work, and so on with the rest. And hence everything is said to have been made on some one day, for God produced nothing in nature which He had not impressed upon the angelic mind. . . . And thus the days are distinguished according to the natural order of the things known, and not according to a succession of knowledge or a succession in the production of things. . . . But according to others, by these days is shown the succession of temporal days and the succession in the production of things.

"But if these two opinions are *referred to the*

[1] 1ª, Qu. 74, art. 2.

mode of production of things, there is not much difference to be found; and this on account of two things in explaining which Augustine differs from others. . . . For, first, by the earth and water which were created first, Augustine understands totally unformed matter; by the making of the firmament and the gathering together of the waters and the appearance of the dry land he understands the impressing of forms upon corporeal matter. But other saints, by the earth and water first created, understand the elements of the world existing with their proper forms; and by the subsequent works they understand a certain distinction in the previously existing bodies. . . . Secondly, they differ as to the production of plants and animals, which some hold to have been actually produced by the work of the six days, whereas Augustine holds that they were produced potentially only. Hence, in believing the six days to have been made together, as Augustine holds, the same mode of production takes place. For, according to both, in the first production of things matter was under the substantial forms of the elements; and according to both, in the first institution of things, neither animals nor plants existed actually. Yet there still remains a fourfold difference; for according to the other saints, after the first production of creatures there was

some time in which there was no light; also, in which there was no firmament formed; also, in which the earth was not yet drained of the waters; and in which the lights of heaven were not formed — and this is the fourth. Now it is not necessary to hold these in Augustine's exposition. Hence, lest we should depreciate either opinion, the objections on both sides will be answered."

The momentous question is whether the Scripture account purports to describe the actual circumstances of order and time. On reading the first chapter of Genesis we most naturally wish to know what the inspired author intends to put forward as doctrine. And this wish becomes the more urgent in the case of those who, like St. Thomas, recognise that an inspired author need not necessarily be conscious of his inspiration, however deeply he may be conscious of the supernatural character of the personal or public revelation he intends to publish or transmit.[1]

What then does the inspired writer *put forward?* Does he intend to give the order in which things actually came into being? If he does, how then could light precede the sun? If he does not, how are we to account for the undoubted mention of "days," and the general

[1] *Cf.* 2ª, 2ªᵉ, Qu. 171, art. 5; Qu. 173, art. 4.

aspect of an historical narrative, confirmed to us by the position of his work at the beginning of an historical book? The important fact for us to know is, what does the inspired author intend to teach? If he has no wish to furnish us with a cosmogony, accurate even in its details of time and order, then the only hope of solving the problem of the earth's beginning lies with the earth itself. St. Thomas clearly states the two conflicting opinions. It is not merely a question of literal and metaphorical interpretation. St. Augustine is, to some of us, as much a realist as St. Basil. It is a question of what the author intended to teach. And this is the point of view that St. Thomas takes.

The mind of St. Thomas displays its breadth in the hesitation he feels in deciding the difficulties of the Biblical account. His treatise on the Jewish Ceremonial and Judicial Law gives us insight into his strong common-sense and his respect for the literal meaning of Scripture. Yet, on the other hand, St. Augustine had been from childhood the fashioner of his thought; and on this point of controversy St. Augustine seemed but developing one of those guesses of genius so common with his contemporary, St. John Chrysostom, for whose commentary on St. Matthew St. Thomas would willingly have exchanged the city of Paris. In the natural

and logical order defended by St. Augustine there was much to commend itself to one with St. Thomas' keen appreciation of sequence and arrangement. Yet he would be a bold commentator who would venture to decide on what side the Saint's sympathies lay. Again and again he replies to difficulties from both standpoints. Wherever his sympathies lay, the two rival theories meet the fairest treatment at his hands.

But this consideration and reserve are not confined to the Church's doctors. The philosophers and men of science whom he quotes are yielded an equal courtesy. Except, perhaps, when he is unfolding the moral virtues, nowhere are the names of philosophers quoted in such numbers or with such a show of deference. An example of this broad tolerance of different schools or opinions is to be found in Qu. 68, art. 1. The title of the article is, "Whether the firmament was made on the second day." The body of the article states in simple terms the opinions of Empedocles, Plato, and Aristotle—the views of St. Basil and St. Augustine being taken for known. Instead of solving the question by ranging himself upon a side and defending it, St. Thomas endeavours to show how each, if rightly understood, might not be incompatible with the text of Scripture. In this

way he arrives at five conclusions, all of which would mean a broad view of Holy Writ, and a tolerant, nay a deferential, attitude towards the masters of philosophical thought. The same readiness to admit opinions, the same hesitation to decide, come out with special relief in his answers to the first objection. He replies in no less than five different manners from Chrysostom, Augustine, Bede, Strabo, John Damascene, and the Rabbi Moses, without giving the least sign which way his personal opinion inclined. Thus in one short article ten opinions find consideration, and of these only two are discarded.

Now this is the more instructive, since we must consider the thirteenth century an age of finality. If it asked many questions, it was because it trusted to find an answer to them all. Whilst European nations were coalitions of loosely-jointed tribes, held together by feudal overlords, it attempted the problem of national armies. It even made bold to dream of a European concert against the Mussulman, a problem too complex even for our modern diplomacy. In art, its youthful enthusiasm grappled with and solved the question of a new architecture. As a century, we may concede to it the praise of energy and instinct. It found many solutions, because its faith gave it the

starting-point of true aspirations and ideals. Where philosophy ends, there on the whole it began. Yet St. Thomas is one of the philosophers it produced, and the philosophic temper of reserve is a characteristic, if not in his days a peculiarity, of his mind. Indeed, the "dumb ox" of Aquino stands out in contrast, not merely with the stirring masses of his fellow-students, but with the youthful headlongness of this century of faith.

A hardly less instructive characteristic is the prudence with which he lays down the hermeneutic principles to be applied to Genesis. It has become a truism that, if all ideas are but imperfect aspects of reality, and all words but halting expressions of an idea, the gap between word and thing makes the outward expression scarcely more than an indication of reality. Most of all is this so when the realities are divine realities; when the thoughts are the dim adumbrations of revelation or prophecy, and the words are the unsettled and unscientific vocabulary of an unlettered people. Hence a revelation to a human mind, however complete in itself, must come under the limitations of our mental laws. Moreover, if the thoughts it has awakened are transmitted in the mould of a primitive and concrete language, it is evident how many difficulties will spring up to counter-

act the advantages of a supernatural doctrine. Words, charged to the full with divine meaning, become the shadowy symbols of momentous truths. To say what is or what is not hidden behind the word might well baffle the commentator; *and revelation, given primarily as an interpreter of the unseen, scarcely exists a few ages before it stands in need of being itself interpreted.* Few portions of the inspired books illustrate this more strikingly than the account of the Hexameron. In reading its perplexing blend of the literal with what is manifestly the metaphorical; of the historical with what might be taken as legendary; of the revealed and individual with what seems natural and widespread, no wish comes more naturally to our lips than to have some simple and secure canon of interpretation affording us a safe conduct through the obscurities.

St. Augustine, his master, had taught St. Thomas to take a broad philosophical view of God's power over things and words. In this broad spirit St. Thomas lays down the practical principle that, "since the divine Scripture may be expounded in many ways, it is not right to attach one's self so strictly to any one opinion as still to maintain it after sure reason has proved the statement, supposed to be contained in Scripture, false; lest on this account Scripture

be derided by infidels, and the way to faith closed against them."[1] St. Thomas could hardly make a plainer profession of the canon that to some extent the Book of Revelation must be interpreted by the Book of Nature, even as the Book of Nature yields its highest lessons only to such as have studied the Book of Revelation. There is no narrow-minded jealousy of the natural sciences here. The certainties, not, indeed, the theories, of science are to be used as keys to the divine enigmas. History, astronomy, geology, biology, and the rest, as they grow to perfection, are to turn a new and brighter light on the message of the Spirit of Truth.

There is a second principle of interpretation that would probably have earned for St. Thomas, had he lived in a certain section of the nineteenth century, the suspicions of a group of apologists whose zeal was their pardonable weakness. Here, as elsewhere, it is from Augustine, the convert Manichean philosopher, that St. Thomas draws his principle, which has found expression in the well-known scholastic proverb, "Miracles must not be multiplied." On two occasions St. Thomas employs this striking principle. To many commentators of the Hexameron the production of light on the first day, preceding as it did the formation of the sun on

[1] 1ª, Qu. 68, art. 1.

the fifth day, has been a serious difficulty. In his solution of the apparent contradiction, St. Basil has supposed the possibility of a mode of producing light, totally opposed to what now obtains in nature, and consequently miraculous. St. Thomas replies that "as Augustine lays down, in the primary institution of things, we are not to expect miracles but natural effects."[1]

A second difficulty which has often perplexed commentators is provided by the statement that "God . . . divided the waters that were under the firmament from those that were above the firmament."[2] The second objection made to this statement in the *Summa* has a modern freshness —one might almost say, bluntness. Theologians are asked, in the name of Nature, how the waters could remain on high. What was to keep them in their place in opposition to the law of gravity? Let us transcribe the *ipsissima verba* of St. Thomas: "It has seemed to some that this objection is to be met by the fact that these waters, though naturally possessed of weight, were sustained above the heavens by divine power. But Augustine rejects this solution, saying that we have now to inquire how God constituted the nature of things, and

[1] 1ª, Qu. 67, art. 4, 3ᵐ.
[2] Gen. i. 7.

not what miracles His power might please to work in them."[1]

We are led to reflect that, in an age since stigmatised as ever seeking to find the miraculous under the merely unusual, it was a fixed principle with the greatest of theologians to give a natural cause for natural effects. We cannot help admiring the manner in which St. Thomas, faithful to this homely principle, attempts the task of opening the mysteries of the Mosaic cosmogony with the rude tools of mediæval science. The fortunes of knowledge, like the fortunes of war, vary with the changing course of time. In our own days, whether true or not, it is said that Science is more scientific and more perfected than Theology. Admit we must that

[1] 1ª, Qu. 68, art. 2, 1ᵐ. Whilst speaking on this point we may quote a few passages, in which St. Thomas, following St. Augustine, puts forward the creation of plants and animals in potency.

Qu. 69, art. 2. "Augustine says that the earth is said to have brought forth herbs and trees, inasmuch as it received the power of bringing them forth. . . . Hence on the third day they were not actually brought forth, but only *causally*."

Qu. 70, art. 1. "But Augustine says that on the fifth day the nature of the waters brought forth fishes and birds *potentially*."

Qu. 72, art. 1. "According to Augustine, the terrestrial animals were brought forth *potentially*."

Qu. 73, art. 1, 3ᵐ. "Nothing entirely new has been subsequently made by God, which has not had some sort of beginning in the works of the Hexameron. For some things existed *materially* . . . and some . . . *causally*. Thus the individuals now generated had a beginning in the first individuals of their species. And if *new species arise*, they had a beginning in certain active principles." What a strange forecast of the "Origin of Species"!

it is more generally studied; and if we can allow a development in Theology as elsewhere, we may at least, *argumenti causa*, see no reason to deny that Theology has fallen considerably behind its sister, Science. But six centuries ago it was otherwise. Scientists were too often busied in searching for the philosopher's stone or in distilling love philtres, at a time when St. Thomas was composing his treatise *De Legibus*, or probing the human heart in the *Pars Secunda*, or outlining in strokes of genius the sublime mysteries of the Eternal Three and of God made Man. It was the hour of victory for Theology. Yet in the full tide of her triumph it is touching to see with what reverence her greatest theologian handles outcast Science, as if he were a student of modern art—the heir of Raphael and Van Dyck, musing over the ruins of Thebes or Babylon. How many of our modern scientists yield the same chivalrous courtesy to now, as they think, prostrate Theology? And how many theologians follow St. Thomas' example of hearkening to Science—no longer a stripling—in those facts which, if denied, serve only to bring Revelation into disrepute?

But perhaps the most expansive exegetical principle has now to be touched upon. The reaction against the Protestant theory of literal inspiration has accustomed our minds to the

thought that scientific views are no part of the divine Revelation. Were we, on all occasions, to seek to know what the words of the inspired writer mean rather than what the inspired writer meant by the words, we should find ourselves in painful contradiction with the certainties of science. When we read that at the word of Joshua the sun stood still, it would be foolishness, or at least foolhardiness, to maintain the literal sense of these words, separated from their living relation with the inspired scribe. The important thing is to know, what did the writer mean by the words. Modern criticism now maintains as a fertile exegetical principle that an "economical" sense has to be given to certain passages, even in the case of Christ. But, following St. Augustine, St. Thomas not merely enunciates this self-same principle, but makes use of it no less than seven times in the twenty-nine articles of his Hexameron. A few examples may be serviceable as a model.

1. In what we might fairly consider his first article he objects that the earth existed in an unformed state, basing his objection on the words "earth was void and empty." In the answer to this he replies that "in St. Augustine's opinion by the words 'earth' and 'water' is signified primary matter (*materia prima*). For to an unlettered people Moses could only express

primary matter under the similitude of known objects. (Qu. 66, art. 1, 1m.)

2. In Qu. 67, art. 4, he quotes without disapproval St. John Chrysostom, who maintains that Moses does not mention the creation of the Angels, and who accounts for this silence of Genesis by saying "that Moses was speaking to an unlettered people."

3. The now classical turn of the phrase is employed in Qu. 67, art. 3, to account for Moses having made mention of the creation of earth and water, but not of air. The words of St. Thomas are: "But we must bear in mind that Moses was speaking to an unlettered people, and that, *condescending* to their weakness—*quorum imbecillitate condescendens*—he put before them what was apparent to their senses."[1]

4. The most unusual form of this principle is found in Qu. 68, art. 1, where, explaining the word "firmament," he says that it signifies that part of the heavens in which clouds are formed, and that "it is called the heavens *equivocally*. Hence, in order to signify this equivocation it is aptly said that 'God called the firmament heaven.'" It is not the intention of St. Thomas

[1] *Cf.* 3a, 26. 5. Magis autem assuetis in consideratione cœlestium corporum manifestata est per signum stellæ, quia ut Xtom dicit Hom. 6 in Matt. "per consueta eos Dominus vocare voluit, eis condescendens."

to attribute to the author of Genesis such a species of equivocation as would lay him open to a charge of untruthfulness. Yet surely we must admit, if we take pattern by the Angel of the Schools, such a *condescensio* (*κατάβασις*) on the part of the inspired writer as will allow scientific truths to find a free foothold in the text. What makes the saint's breadth of view the more remarkable and consoling to exegetes of our day is that it was not incompatible with an unflinching reverence for the sacredness of the inspired books. The thirteenth century could not bring the critical methods of a later age to bear upon Holy Writ. It was the very greatness of their faith that inclined them to comment its pages almost as if the very translations they used were inspired—nay, verbally revealed. No one can read St. Thomas' commentary on the Gospels or Epistles without being struck at his childlike trust in the divine side of the sacred books. The most trifling turn of phrase is sometimes employed as a text for some striking commentary—an analogy between dogmas, a point of subtle asceticism. Yet when the Scripture is treated formally as a fountain of Dogma, we are surprised, perhaps, to find the seeming childlikeness of his trust giving way to the cautiousness of a critical mind, prepared to admit that in speaking to unlettered hearers Moses had made

use of a *condescensio*, a *κατάβασις*, and had used words *equivoce* or *secundum equivocationem.*

Nothing can be more suggestive to the theologian of to-day, whose wrestling is with the flesh and blood of learned adversaries, than the reason St. Thomas gives for breadth of mind and tolerance in interpreting the mysteries of Scripture. There is a reality of compassion in his counsel that we should impose no meaning upon its inspired words in contradiction to established scientific facts, "lest Scripture be scoffed at by unbelievers, and the way of faith be blocked to them." In all his works, no matter how deep his speculative glance into the abstract or mysterious, there still remains the perfume of an earnest longing for the souls of those "unbelievers" whose unfaith pierced him to the heart. Too divinely magnanimous to seek fame as a reward of his ceaseless activity, the one consolation for all his labours was to feel that he had opened, or at least had not shut, the door of faith upon some erring brother. You may pore over his polemical writings, those nervous, logical, hastily written treatises against a living adversary and in defence of that religious rule which he loved better than life, without finding one word calculated to wound feelings or "block the way of faith" to his enemies. The study of his doctrine and of his method unfail-

ingly broadens the mind and fits it to view the universe of things as a vast organised kingdom, where not a leaf stirs without throwing undulations to the most distant confines of being. But if we do not catch the message of the Angel of the Schools' self-forgetful, apostolic spirit, the best gift he offers us is still unfound. And if we would see that spirit in its fulness, steeling ourselves against the sense of disappointment which will arise at first sight, let us take up those semi-mysterious pages in which the Angel of the Schools unfolds his views of the creation of the world and man.

"SCHOLASTICISM AND THE MODERN METHOD"

SOME of us who have gone through a course of philosophy in preparation for the priesthood can recall the weary hours we passed during the first years of our acquaintance with Scholasticism. It was hard to find anything to catch our imagination, or fix our attention. The daily torture of thrusting or parrying peripatetic problems which we felt sure our intellectual father Aristotle would have disowned, in Latin which we felt sure our literary father Cicero would have anathematised, was only borne in the hope that some day we should find these studies a help in the great work of winning souls. Yet it was a heavy task to pore over tomes printed abroad, and printed, as we told ourselves, so abominably, with heavy type welded together into interminable paragraphs. We began to look back to our dainty copies of Homer or Horace with their clear type, and their apt notes, not over-learned, but just sufficiently steeped in classical lore to bring

the poet into living contact with our souls. We missed the clearly-drawn and gently-toned maps—the full indices, the air of modernity of our histories and geographies, which we grew, alas! to regret when it was too late. Soon we began to ask ourselves, could any social or religious good come of such intellectual jargon as *Barbara, Celarent?*—what was the precise social momentum of a Sorites?—how could the conversion of our fatherland be furthered by a more profound knowledge of *Ens Rationis?*—what were the occult relations between Transcendentalism, say, and the sweating system?—until our mind grew sick within us at the thought of squandering the precious years of life in a quixotic wandering after intellectual will-o'-the-wisps.

No doubt such a period of acute emotion is likely to come and go; come, on first acquaintance with the deeper philosophic studies; and go, when it is at last clear that to have dug deep down in mental darkness and solitude to the lower strata of first principles is to have advanced the Kingdom of God's Truth on earth.

But a further thought sprang up to take the place of the banished doubt, and grew at length to a difficulty. It was not philosophic teaching with its accompanying abstraction that appeared

fatuous and useless. It was that form of philosophic thought to which our minds were being bent. Our difficulty was not philosophy, but Scholasticism. No doubt this further difficulty would have had its ebb and flow in a natural day, had our minds been allowed to rest. But we were confronted by a solid phalanx of non-Catholic thinkers who ignored Scholasticism, and by a determined band of Catholic apologists, who somewhat timidly defended it. At last our minds wavered before the thoughts from within and suggestions from without, and we somewhat anxiously asked ourselves if there was any truth in the oft-spoken thesis: "Scholasticism must give way to the Modern Method."

To encourage discussion let me set down the results of my own thoughts on this thesis.

I note that the formulator of such a thesis must have found the solution of well-nigh unfathomable difficulties. For, to my mind, it is well-nigh impossible to define what is "Scholasticism," and what the "Modern Method." Now to attempt the defence of a thesis without boundary, mere position without magnitude, is the hope of a bold, perhaps a foolhardy man. And to consider that the subject and predicate of the above thesis can be circumscribed by any satisfactory definition would suggest the proofs or the suspicion that the writer had made

up his mind after an easy off-hand glance at a thorny philosophical problem.

To justify these severe criticisms, let us begin by asking ourselves: "What is Scholasticism?" Before we can hope for an answer we must go on to ask: "Who are Scholastics?" It would be useless to write on Feudalism if we made no effort to determine with whom it began and with whom it ended. Yet how difficult it is to say who are scholastics and who are not. Shall we hold the father of Scholasticism to be Peter Lombard, or Hugh of St. Victor, or St. Anselm, or St. John Damascene, or St. Augustine? Did Scholasticism appear merely as a phenomenon of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries? Or does it extend from Boethius in the sixth to Billuart in the eighteenth?

But it would be even a harder task to describe it logically than to circumscribe it chronologically. Its logical content defies identification, as it has defied localisation.

Is it a method or a system, or both?

Or is it a literary manner? Is it didascalic or co-ordinative? Is it practical (*μέθοδος*), or speculative (*σύστημα*), or neither, or both?

If Scholasticism is a system, as Platonism and Aristotelianism are held to be systems, then it may be asked, how it contrives to shelter such divergent thinkers as Erigena, Abelard, Aquinas,

and Scotus. If we venture to reply that Scholasticism is identical with Thomism, we shall be forced to find a new name for the followers of Scotus, Bonaventure, and Suarez. If we make bold to say that Scholasticism is nothing more than Aristotelianism conditionally baptized, or merely named afresh on its reception into the Church, what name shall be given to the Platonism of Abelard and the Nominalism of William of Occam? Is Scholasticism but another name for Thomism, Bonaventurism, Scotism? Is it Realism, or Nominalism, or Conceptualism, or all three, or none? Thus if we hold it to be a system, we cannot shirk the baffling inquiry, "Which system? Thomism, Scotism, &c.?" And if it is a system, what are its principles? since a system is knowledge of abstract or concrete facts arranged and organised by the light of a principle or principles. Can we maintain historically or logically that Scholasticism is Hylomorphism or Creationism or any other abstract view of Being? All these necessary questions lead us to suspect that our term Scholasticism, at first sight so clear and apparently definable, holds more than we bargained for, and that far from being a fixed system which finds itself antagonistic to modern philosophic thought, it had already been a pioneer of the moderns in every field of truth and heresy.

On the other hand, it would seem easier to concede that Scholasticism was a method rather than a system. The influential men of the thirteenth century, the golden age of Scholasticism, were *Doctores*, *i.e.* teachers rather than thinkers. Their influence lay in their power of summary and their clearness of exposition. They were unapproachable in their successful compilation of text-books. Their highest academic honour was that of Master. And it is the master rather than the discoverer, the teacher rather than the thinker, who can write a successful text-book. I am not denying that many of the scholastics of the thirteenth century were true, earnest, and successful thinkers. To concede this is to bear out my contention that Scholasticism well-nigh defies identification. But, for the sake of argument, I would urge that, on the whole, its professors in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were teachers imparting organised knowledge through a method, rather than thinkers discovering and organising knowledge into a system. Yet here again we are perplexed by the recurrence of the question, "Which method?" Is it that of Alcuin, or William of Champeaux, or Bonaventure, or Aquinas, or Capreolus, or Cajetan, or Suarez, or Billuart? If we sometimes read in certain well-meaning but hardly well-informed

histories of philosophy that Scholasticism diverges from the modern method by being deductive rather than inductive, we are staggered by the empiric earnestness and accuracy displayed by such a classical scholastic as St. Thomas. Students who wish to refresh their inductive at the same time as their deductive faculties, might be safely introduced to the Anthropology of the *Summa*. A Thomist can never cease to wonder how it can be said that the *Secunda Secundae* is merely deductive, or even dominantly so. It is deduction pure and simple, or rather, is it not a brilliant exercise of induction, and its associate, deduction, to find out and organise the marvellous ethics of Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance? Are the Angelic Doctor's subtle searchings into the human heart, its pathology and therapeutics, but a lifeless conclusion from a barren principle? Perhaps the nearest approach to a logical definition of Scholasticism is this: "The scientific attempt to adjust and justify the relations of Faith and Reason, of Natural Knowledge and Supernatural Revelation." Yet if this definition be accepted, Scholasticism must include St. Augustine and St. Irenæus—nay, more, it cannot close the door upon St. Paul discoursing to the Corinthians on the immortality of the body, and St. John reconciling the Incar-

nation with the Platonic *Λογος*. Moreover, in case this definition be accepted as a working hypothesis, what becomes of the thesis that Scholasticism must give way to the modern method? Whatever may, or may not, be included under the term "modern method," it is suicidal of Christians to expect that it will finally show the hopelessness of harmonising the truths that come from God through reason with those that come from God through Revelation.

There would be little profit in putting forward the view that Scholasticism, if neither a system nor a method, is, at any rate, a literary manner. The *Stabat Mater* and *Dies Irae* are equally children of Scholasticism with the *Cur Deus Homo* or the *Summa Contra Gentiles*. Moreover, why should the modern mind consider that literary atmosphere to be damping which has vibrated to every note of literature, from the flawless legal preciseness and passionless accuracy of the *Summa* to the rhapsodies of Bernard and Bonaventure?

In answer to all this it may be argued that Scholasticism is not a definite metaphysical, logical, or literary school, but a definite spirit, and though we may not know its boundaries, we can tell its existence. But will it then be true to say that Scholasticism is wholly hostile to whatever is true and advantageous in the

modern method? If the Scholasticism of St. Thomas sought to know and employed all that was true and advantageous in the science of its day, shall we conclude that there must be war to the bitter end between Scholasticism and modern thought, and that no *modus vivendi* can be found between two such powerful forces for good or evil? Surely all this is puzzling enough.

Yet we have not determined what is meant by the modern method, the predicate of our thesis. Here our difficulties thicken rather than diminish. Do we mean the modern philosophic method? And if so, what do we mean by modern? Will Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* be considered too ancient, and Lepidi's *Philosophia* too recent? Must we include such irreconcilables as Descartes and Kant, Hume and Newman, Butler and Voltaire? Is it the modern method of Kant or Hegel or Spencer? Is it idealism, or realism, or transcendentalism, or positivism, or agnosticism, or scepticism, or a fashionable blend of all these in a literary eclecticism? We fell out with Scholasticism on account of its subtlety and obscurity. Shall we fall in love with the limpid clearness of Kant's *Kritik*, or Hegel's *Logik*, or Spencer's *Psychology?* Shall we fly from the futility of *Ens Rationis* to the shelter of the reconciliation

of opposites and the absorption of everything in its other? But if we do, we can hardly justify ourselves under the plea of coming more in contact with mankind and being more serviceable to our flesh and blood. But, perhaps, the modern method is not so much to be found in modern philosophy as in what is called modern science. Here, again, the difficulty is, "What is the modern method?" Is it the method in history, or mathematics, or literature, or physics, or biology? Are we to desert the crazy craft of Scholasticism for the binomial theorem, or the romantic school of literature, or the realistic school of art, or the correlation and persistence of force, or the survival of the fittest? Surely, to propound such a thesis is not to reason but to dream. Indeed, it is a dream of the impossible to consider that amongst the myriad writers who have flooded the nineteenth century with works of art, literature, history, philosophy, mathematics, physics, dynamics, chemistry, and biology, there is any one definite spirit which marks them off from the writers of any other age, and gives them a right to supersede the combined scholarship of the scholastics.

General theses are the delight of younger men, and the torture of scholars. Nothing is easier than to frame a general statement, nothing more perplexing than to prove or even explain it.

Were it necessary to word a thesis on the subject we have been discussing, the following would, perhaps, be a more definite form than that which we have set down at the head of this article, as the subject of our examination : "Some Characteristics of Scholasticism and Modern Methods ; or, Scholasticism and the Philosophic Methods of the Nineteenth Century ; or, Scholastic Philosophy and Modern Inductive Methods." But even such narrowly restricted theses as these cover much ground and tend to spread out in useless generalisations.

Of greatest importance to us who are called upon to profess a knowledge of philosophy and theology is the survey of our scholastic curriculum in detail with a view to supplementing it with the established findings of modern scholarship. A detailed attempt to provide such a survey would overtax the natural limits of an article in a monthly Review. But we may allow ourselves to sketch the lines on which such an undertaking should run. Not to deal with abstractions, let us consider psychology, cosmology, metaphysics, theology, and ecclesiastical history. Leaving metaphysics out of consideration for the moment, we may note a striking difference between modern scholarship and all that preceded it. Modern scholars either adopt or consider the momentous factor of evolution.

Thus in psychology, though much has been done in recent years to make scientific observations and conclusions in physico-psychology and psychometry, yet the most important modern addition to psychology is the evolutionary view of the phylogenetic origin of organs and faculties. No Catholic philosopher can be fully equipped for his work if he has not made himself acquainted, say, with the "Principles of Psychology" of Herbert Spencer, or with works advocating the same or like views of *psychology*.

The student of *cosmology* must either accept or at least deal with the evolutionary theory of the universe. He will probably be surprised to observe how the generalisation underlying evolution serves as a useful explanatory formula in geology and biology—nay, that it becomes the most convenient working principle for classifying and systematising the vast materials and objects of these sciences.

In *metaphysics* a transcendental evolution must occupy the attention of Catholic philosophers. But the supreme object of discussion must remain that of realism and the consequent subject of causality. Modern Catholic philosophers are, perhaps, meagre in their treatment of such fundamental questions, though much, if not all, of this meagreness may be explained by the exigencies of a handbook.

The Catholic *theologian* has to deal with a many-sided form of evolution. He is brought face to face with the evolutionary theory of religion, and that complex form of it which we term Christianity. He must be prepared to give a patient hearing to philosophers who consider modern Christian religious thought and activity to be no more than a highly evolved emotional complex of the most interesting species of vertebrata. Moreover, in his discussions with heretics and schismatics, he will probably find himself forced to adopt some form of development, if he is to vindicate the continuity of our marvellously complex and organised theology, discipline and liturgy with the apparent simplicity of primitive Christianity. Furthermore, the transcendental evolution put forward by such as Hegel must be considered even when not adopted by all Catholic students of the divine internal processions which are the basis of the Trinity, and the external processions which result in creation.

The Catholic *historian* must be prepared to follow the masters of modern history in their patient research, in their painstaking classifications, in the accuracy of their facts, in the reserve and rarity of their conclusions.

In all the above spheres of intellectual activity, the modern scholastic, who puts himself in touch

with modern methods of philosophical, theological, or historical research, must ever feel conscious of the thought that, far from diluting his mind with thoughts uncongenial to Scholasticism, he is but drinking more deeply of the spirit of such true scholastics as Bl. Albert the Great and St. Thomas Aquinas. We must distinguish here as elsewhere between two very distinct questions — the scholastic methods of teaching philosophy, and the scholastic method of teaching.

Education in the Middle Ages, even as in the twentieth century, was not a fruitless search after the philosopher's stone, nor yet a spinning of intellectual cobwebs from the premises of a foolish credulity. No one was taken to have finished his scholastic course of study until he had mastered the *Quadrivium* and the *Trivium;* or, in other words, until he had acquired a satisfactory knowledge of what the scholarly world then knew of mathematics, history, physical science, and philosophy. It is clear from the pages of the *Summa* that St. Thomas was deeply versed in all the sciences of his day. His range of thought extends from the heights of the Trinity to the various forms of a commonwealth and the lawfulness of ruses in war. His last days, passed on a sick-bed, in the peacefulness of his Cistercian shelter, were employed in commenting

on the Canticle of Canticles, and, if we may believe tradition, in writing a work on aqueducts. No one could profess to have inherited his scholastic method or spirit who would stand aloof from the scientific acquirements of his own times in mathematics, history, the natural sciences, and philosophy.

Perhaps there are concrete reasons why modern methods of discovery and teaching throw some minds out of touch with the Scholasticism of our modern philosophical curricula. There is the fact that philosophy is practically viewed by us as an introduction to theology. Such a view, though undoubtedly true, is not self-recommendatory to men who look on theology as a belated survival of spook and ancestry worship. When men of this mental make are asked to give their sympathy to modern scholastic methods, they feel that they are but asked to take under their roof a stranger who will turn out to be an enemy. They find it utterly repugnant to taste, not to say assimilate, a doctrine which prepares the mind for Transubstantiation or the Trinity. They will have none of a method which disciplines the mind to rise up to an act of faith. They almost feel that were they to toy with Scholasticism, it would go hard with them if they did not come to hold every mystery from the Trinity to the Ascension, and submit to every Catholic rite from

Baptism and Confession to the adoration of the Cross and the sprinkling of blessed ashes. Scholastics have toiled successfully to prove that philosophy is the handmaid of theology. And modern scholars of a certain school take care that if the handmaid shares in the honour, she shall still more share in the disrepute, of her mistress.

Another reason for the divorce between Scholasticism and some phases of modern thought is to be found not in its relations to theology, but in its relations to theologians, who, through good luck or ill, are now our only or our chief scholastic philosophers. It would be euphemism to say that the Scholasticism as presented by some of our modern text-book makers is a mind-forming, though it may well be a mind-informing, system and method. It is sometimes painful to the careful spectator of modern thought to read from time to time in our reviews how certain excellent second-class text-books are "epoch-making," "masterly summaries," "without which no priest's library can be complete," and so on. As a confirmed and unrepentant student of one of the fountainheads of Scholasticism I may venture to ask if the stream has not been greatly mudded and puddled by the restless feet of these commentators. The numberless *Cursus Sacrae Theologiae* are not such stimu-

lating nectar as the *Summa*. If we have gone away from the fount and dug wells to ourselves, our longing for a more invigorating Scholasticism is not unnatural. To slake our thirst we must go further up the stream. Our modern authors are not to be despised, nor must the above words be conceived as a reproach to men who are above reproach. But they themselves would be the first to own that in their struggles with the profusion of modern developments in theology and philosophy, the old philosophical spirit of brilliant analogy and generalisation has become well-nigh a lost art. A commentary on the *De Trinitate* of St. Thomas will now be thrice the bulk of the text. Theologian philosophers must never forget that as in architecture, so also in philosophy, the mind of genius is detected in the planning of main lines, in the balanced contrast of masses, in the gradation and juxtaposition of colour, in the happy and natural employment of material to its best advantage, in the foresight of atmospheric effects, in the unity of conception based on unity of aim, in the noble achievement of concentrating the most thought in the least material. It will be a joyful day for modern Scholasticism when we train not merely the logical but the thinking faculties by personal contact with the great architects of Scholasticism. Two questions still

remain to be suggested in this querulous paper: "Is our modern seminarian philosophy rightly and accurately called Scholasticism?" which I suppose it is; and, "Are our modern professors and pupils moved by the youthful, enthusiastic, empiric, apostolic spirit of the true Scholastics?" —which they must settle for themselves.

MYSTICISM

THE would-be writer on Mysticism is confronted at the outset of his attempt by the impossibility of clearly defining his subject-matter. He may not say that Mysticism is a philosophical system or method unless he is prepared to prove the intellectual identity of Scotus Erigena and Schelling, of Porphyry and St. Teresa. He may not call it a philosophical mood unless he is capable of discounting its ethical features, which are far from insignificant. If he bravely follows modern authorities and defines it as an "endeavour of the human mind to grasp the Divine essence or the ultimate reality of things, and to enjoy the blessedness of actual communion with the Highest," he will then have the mortification of knowing that the phrase "endeavour to grasp" has mercilessly shut out all those Catholic mystics who hold that no endeavour of the human mind can ever grasp the Divine essence. Let him, as some Catholic writers have done, boldly define it as the love of God, and he will have the satisfaction of holding that all men in a state of grace are mystics with-

out knowing it. In this sense the humblest Catholic maid at her loom or ploughman in his furrow is a mystic equally with Gertrude or John of the Cross.

To understand Mysticism we must take it to mean a union with God. But there are many kinds of union with God. Firstly, there is Substantial Union. Into that ineffable circle of communion the Undivided Three alone may enter. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three in Person, are one in substance or nature. The Divine prerogative is like the Divine name incommunicable. Had Eutyches succeeded in making the world believe in a Christ of only one nature, there would have been an end to the belief in the true God, One in Three.

Secondly, there is Hypostatic or Personal Union, or union of a created nature with one or more of the Divine Persons. St. Thomas holds that each of the Divine Persons separately or all the Divine Persons collectively or the Divine Nature by itself could have assumed one and the same human nature. Nay, that they could have assumed each and every created nature ; and this, we may add, without risk of pantheism. Yet this unspeakable privilege belongs to one human nature alone—the adorable humanity of Jesus Christ. After the substantial unity and communion of the Three Persons in one nature, there

is no unity, union, or communion so great as that of the One Divine Person in two natures.

Thirdly, there is Causal Union. There is the union between the Creator and all His creatures. It takes place in three ways: by essence, presence, and power.

Fourthly, there is an Intellectual and Affective Union with God—and this may be either natural or supernatural. It is possible that a mind may come to discern the existence of a cause of the universe—a Supreme Being of high intellectual and moral capabilities. From this purely natural knowledge may spring a purely natural appreciation or love. There would then be a natural, intellectual, and affective union between the Deity and the mind.

But on the supposition that God has made Himself known otherwise than through Nature and has revealed new traits of His Divine character, it is evident that a new knowledge and a new love are obtainable. This is the knowledge of faith and the love of charity. Every soul in a state of grace on this earth has this supernatural, intellectual, and affective union with God.

By St. Paul the action of God placing some in this union is called a vocation—or calling. Now even as every soul in grace is called and borne to a position of pre-eminent union, so are there some, even of those supernaturally united by faith

and charity, who are called here below to an extraordinary state of supernatural enlightenment and love. These are the mystics and saints.

The moral science which by principles and precepts shows how faith and charity may be developed in the soul through grace is called Ascetical Theology.

The moral science which by principles and precepts enables a soul to discern and correspond with God's extraordinary supernatural dealings with mind and heart is called Mystical Theology. The term Mystical Theology is first used in the work of the pseudo-Dionysius in a completely different meaning. There it is the knowledge of God by way of negation. It is the science of recognising that God neither is nor has any of the limitations or imperfections of His creatures. I will not maintain that the modern phrase "Mystical Theology" is not the lineal descendant of its ancestor in the works of Dionysius, but its meaning has been changed meanwhile.

Now it may be useful to distinguish between mystics and saints. Logically if not biographically a mystic is not necessarily a saint, nor need every saint be a mystic. Visions are not sanctity; nor is holiness rapture. There may have been saints who never had an ecstasy. There may have been ecstatica who could lay no claim to heroic virtue. A saint, then, is one who is called

to an extraordinary fervour of supernatural love or charity here below. Some who are not saints may rank above saints in bliss. Newman may rank above St. Stanislaus; Lacordaire above St. Rose of Lima. Heroicity of virtue regards the quality of fervour, not the quantity of grace, whereas glory is measured out in proportion to the magnitude of grace, fervour being ensured by a residence in Purgatory.

The true mystic is one who receives an extraordinary supernatural, intellectual union with God; the false mystic is one who seeks it unduly, either in opposition to God, or by unaided reason, or as the end of life or as a substitute for holiness. The false mystic is detected by his false doctrines, his contradictions, his moral excesses, his obstinacy, his disobedience. The true mystic is recognised by his conformity with dogma, his consistency, his asceticism, his teachableness, his obedience. False mystics sometimes found sects. True mystics sometimes found religious orders.

To false mystics ecstasy is a paradise; to true mystics it is sometimes a responsibility and a Divine trial of humility. The false mystic thinks that it is best to know God here below; the true mystic holds it best to love Him.

The false mystic says: "It is good for us to be here"; the true mystic hastens down from the

mount to the sick in body and soul, who are ever to be found at the mountain foot. The false mystic would steal Divine things; the true mystic bears them (*patitur divina*).

We may now hazard a definition of our subject-matter. A mystic is one who is called out of the ordinary level of Christian perfection to an extraordinary supernatural state of intellectual union with God. As a science, Mysticism gives the principles and precepts which enable the soul to discern, correspond with, and safeguard God's dealings with the understanding. As a state, Mysticism is a combination of powers, habits and acts which are the condition or outcome of these dealings.

Whilst formulating these definitions we do not pretend that they are accepted or likely to be accepted by all writers, or even by all Catholic writers. Some of these latter would reason in this way. Habitual contemplation is the essence of the mystic state. Where there is ordinary contemplation there is ordinary Mysticism; where there is extraordinary contemplation there is extraordinary Mysticism. Hence there should be a division into ordinary and extraordinary Mystics. Furthermore, these writers would hold that there is a close relation between the three branches of Theology and the three classical divisions of the spiritual life. Thus :—

Moral Theology is the guide of the Purgative Way.
Ascetical Theology is the guide of the Illuminative Way.
Mystical Theology is the guide of the Unitive Way.

This manner of looking at the subject has the advantage of enforcing the all-importance of ordinary contemplation, and of bringing home to our minds that the root of all true Mysticism is that development of the ten commandments which we call Moral Theology. But writers like Meynard[1] prefer to confine Ascetical Theology to God's ordinary supernatural dealings with the soul in the Purgative, Illuminative and Unitive Ways, whilst including all extraordinary dealings under Mystical Theology. We have followed this view rather than the other. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages. But when men are agreed about things, it is childish to dispute about words.

Though no mention is here made of the affective element in Mysticism, it is not to be supposed that, biographically considered, this element is wanting. We have logically distinguished the mystic from the saint, on the authority of Our Lord Himself, Who describes certain souls that prophesied in

[1] *Traité de la Vie Intérieure*, par A. Meynard, O.P.

His name, having received supernatural enlightenment from Him, and yet were unknown to Him on account of their sinfulness of life. Yet we are far from saying that the true mystic is one whose life need not correspond with his supernatural enlightenment. We have merely insisted on the fact that Mysticism being derived from or at least akin to Mystery, receives its name from the extraordinary supernatural relations between God and the human understanding. It is beside the point to object that there is a consensus of ascetical opinion on the supremacy of the affective over the cognoscitive union with God. We are not concerned to inquire which element is most necessary to a successful human life, but which element is most necessary to the logical content of the word "Mysticism." Hence we are willing to admit that in point of fact true Catholic mystics are saints, or at least on the way to be saints. But we add the theological distinction that it is the affective element in their Mysticism which denominates them saints, and the cognoscitive element which denominates them mystics. We are borne out in this by the general application of the word Mysticism to every endeavour, sober or fantastic, of the human soul to attain a contemplative union with the First Truth and the Supreme Beauty. Or to take a further example from Church History. Why is it that we instinctively give the

name of mystics to the "ankres" and "ankresses" who appear in its pages? There were many equally holy souls, no doubt, living their simple, busy, dutiful lives in the Rome, Paris, London, Bristowe of those days. To style them mystics we should have to do violence to the meaning of the word. Yet it is felt on all sides that these "ankres" and "ankresses" who shut themselves apart from the busy whirl of life in order to listen to God's eternal truth were mystics or the makings of mystics. It was not in mere weariness of their fellow-men, nor in the bitterness of disappointment, nor in the ambitious hope of mounting upwards unhelped and being like to God, that they parted with most of the innocent joys of life. They were enamoured of the "Divine cloud," the bright darkness of Divine mysteries hidden within them; they felt that His Divine Majesty, in the words of B. Julian of Norwich, had set up His "See" in their hearts. Their one aim was to blunt the world's after-images which haunted their thought, so that, if His Majesty thought fit, some passing image of hidden mysteries might be flashed upon their expectant soul.

Whilst on this point of theology, we may accentuate a doctrine which is not without its weight in sorting the true mystics from the false. The mystic communications vouchsafed to certain privileged souls are based upon the subjective

virtue of faith and the objective matter of revelation. The deposit of faith is given once for all; nothing further will be added till the end of time. As St. Thomas says: "In the time of grace the whole faith of the Church is built upon the revelation of the Unity and Trinity made to the Apostles."[1] Nothing can be added or taken away whilst the Church of the Apostles endures. Revelations can add nothing to revelation. To proclaim a new gospel is to announce a new heresy. No need to analyse revelations that pretend to add to the deposit. Their pretension is their condemnation. The everlasting gospel of the Abbot Joachim was condemned because it was false, and it was false because it was new. Whereas true revelations, as St. Thomas goes on to remark, regard the great drama of human life and action. "At no time have there been wanting those who have had the spirit of prophecy, not for the proclamation of a new gospel, but for the guidance of human affairs."[2] If we read the lives of Christian mystics we are struck by the fact that their supernatural enlightenment regards either coming personal or public events such as sickness, death, plagues, schisms, heresies, or it regards the great mysteries of the Incarnation and the Trinity. This will account for the mystical phenomenon that the highest form of

[1] 2^{a}, 2^{ae}, Qu. 174, art. 6. [2] Ibid., ad. 3^{m}.

vision is that in which the soul seems to see the Blessed Trinity. Such visions, whilst adding nothing new to the deposit of faith, yet serve to give theology a new image of Divine things. Hence it is advisable for the scientific theologian to rise from his St. Thomas or his Billuart and refresh himself with the Dialogue of St. Catharine of Siena or the Interior Castle of St. Teresa.

The connection of Mysticism with the cognoscitive powers of the soul may throw some light on another difficult question. Non-Catholic writers on Mysticism are apt to make a general charge of pantheistic tendencies against mystics as a class, whether it be the Mysticism of Brahma or of Buddha; of the Persian Sufis or of the Neo-Platonists; of St. Bernard or of Bd. Henry Suso; of St. Teresa or of Scheffler; of Henry More or of Schelling. In the above imperfect list of mystics a Catholic is chiefly concerned with Catholics, whom he would defend from every suspicion of pantheism. Willingly we concede that there are modes of expression even in Catholic mystical writings which have a pantheistic look. There is something startling at first sight in St. Peter's statement that by the boons of Jesus Christ we become "partakers of the Divine nature."[1] But St. John explains it by saying that by the indwelling of charity in our

[1] γένησθε θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως (2 Pet. i. 4).

hearts through grace "we are now the sons of God; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be" (1 John iii. 2). So, too, we have to give an orthodox meaning to the term "Deificatio" found in the pseudo-Dionysius, and its German equivalent "Vergotten," so common to the German mystics of the fourteenth century.

It must be clearly borne in mind that the union which is aimed at or at least obtained is neither substantial nor personal, *i.e.* hypostatic, but either intellectual or affective. A substantial union with the divinity would be thorough-going pantheism. A hypostatic union with the divinity would be a pseudo-pantheism in which the creature would at length lose its created individuality and become merged or submerged in God. But the union described with such evident difficulty by the mystics takes place in the faculties and not in the essence of the soul.[1] To understand it, let us agree with St. Thomas that even in this life it is possible to have a passing glance of the beatific vision of God's essence, not as a permanent endowment but as a transient act.[2] It is furthermore the doctrine of St. Thomas and his school that the Divine essence, of itself and not by the intermediary of any image, is united to the beatified

[1] We must not be taken to deny the doctrine of St. Thomas that habitual grace resides in the essence of the soul.

[2] 2^{a}, 2^{ae}, Qu. 175, art. 3, ad. 2^{m}.

understanding both as the principle and the terminus of the beatific knowledge.[1] Psychology informs us that as a necessary accompaniment of every intellectual act there is an idea (the medium or principle of understanding) and an internal word (the terminus of understanding). But as no created idea or word could either impress or express the infinite and increate truth, God takes this double office upon Himself. Well may we marvel how it comes to pass that the blessed do not lose consciousness of their own individuality! Yet by the light of glory the human understanding is so strengthened that in the blaze of that uncreated light and in the intimacy of that ineffable union wherein God becomes, so to say, the thought of their mind, the blessed are not merely conscious of God, and of themselves, but conscious also of their acts, of their emotions, and of their personal distinction from God, Who is so closely knit with their souls. There is no submergence of consciousness in the beatific vision. The poet's sentiment, "All rapture through and through," can only refer to the intensity of a deep emotion and not to the suspension of even the slightest element of consciousness. Neither our individuality nor the consciousness of our individuality suffers the least eclipse in the knowledge of that which is our perfect happiness. We

[1] St. Thos., 1ª, Qu. 12, art. 5. Billuart, *De Deo.*, Diss. 4, art, 7.

are ourselves supremely in deed and in thought. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, yet not one jot or tittle of ourselves or of our self-consciousness is destroyed or dulled.

It is otherwise with mystics who are still on earth. Whatever extraordinary supernatural visions may be granted them, their state cannot be equivalent to that of the blessed with its phenomenon of supreme bliss and absolute self-consciousness. Even that profound mystic, St. Paul, when rapt to third heaven, where he caught sight for a passing moment of the Unveiled Presence, knew not whether he was "in the body or out of the body" when the vision was vouchsafed. In other words, a fraction of his consciousness was submerged or suspended, retiring into potency whence it awoke afterwards into act. It is at once seen that this submergence or suspension of some threads of consciousness is an imperfection. Jesus Christ, who had always the full and complete habitual view of the beatific vision, suffered no raptures or swoons. Tradition would seem to suggest the same of Our Blessed Lady. Yet she must have been granted incomparably greater and more frequent visions than St. Paul. It would be the very greatness and sublimity of her revelations that prevented her soul from losing any elements of her perfect self-consciousness. How zealously

have theologians protested against the thought that this self-consciousness was suspended even for a moment on Calvary by a swoon of suffering! It is to be remarked, moreover, that in the lives of certain mystics the raptures so frequent in mid life are much diminished in their closing years. Yet of course, whilst the human mind is not yet strengthened by the light of glory (*lumen gloriæ*), some slight suspension of consciousness must result, when God deals profoundly with the understanding. St. Francis of Sales ventures to analyse the psychology of this suspension in words that must be dealt with theologically in order to be understood as they ought. In his treatise on the love of God he writes: "... The whole soul and all its faculties fall as it were asleep and make no movement nor action whatever, except the will alone, and even this *does no more than receive* the delight and satisfaction which the presence of its well-beloved affords. And what is yet more admirable is that the will *does not even perceive the delight* and contentment which she receives, enjoying it insensibly, being not mindful of herself but of Him whose presence gives her this pleasure." Again: "... The soul who in this sweet repose enjoys this delicate sense of the Divine presence, *though she is not conscious of the enjoyment.*"[1]

[1] St. Francis of Sales, "The Love of God." Trans. by H. B. Mackey, O.S.B., Bk. vi., ch. viii., p. 255.

It is this intellectual and affective union with the Divine truth, resulting in a partial suspension of consciousness in some of its outlying regions, which mystics call self-annihilation, or "Deificatio" or "Vergotten." But the restriction of self-consciousness is never anything but a consequence of man's unbeatified state.

We can now see how some phrases from mystical writings wear a pantheistic look. Everything that proclaims a diminution of consciousness would seem to include an *ipso facto* diminution of personality. To rise in the scale in being is to rise in self-consciousness. So that in the highest beings it is true to say that they either have no individuality or are conscious of their individuality. Whilst allowing the sphere of consciousness to be restricted in some partial unimportant regions, the mystics never for a moment doubted that in the effulgence of the highest miraculous illumination the soul could say with truth: "I am I. God is God. I am not God. Though by His great mercy I am closely knit with Him and like unto Him, still our natures and persons dwell infinitely apart, and it is in thought only that we are linked together." [1]

[1] We might distinguish between essential and non-essential consciousness. We should then define a swoon as a suspension of essential consciousness. An ecstasy would be a suspension of accidental, occasioned by an increase of essential consciousness.

A common feature of mystic souls is their influence over their fellow-men. Had the "ankres" and "ankresses," whose fascinating lives form a literature apart, remained by their fireside all their life, they would have drawn little attention. But as they fled from the world, the world followed them. It speaks much for their sound sense that almost every human sorrow came to the door of their cell to be undone. Even the trials of the hearth, the burden of poverty, the miseries of faction, all fled after those mystic souls who had fled God-wards in search of true peace. In centuries when luxuries were found only on the tables or in the halls of the rich, the lowliest Catholic spinning-maid or churl had the luxury of a ready sympathy and oftentimes other world-wise counsel. The times have changed. What our forefathers would have deemed luxuries are now the necessaries even of the poor. Yet it may be questioned if the world is not the poorer by its sad dearth of that truly Christian luxury, the Mysticism of Christ's saints.

IMAGINATION AND FAITH

THE abuse of the imagination is easy, and far-reaching in its consequences. In matters of faith it seems to find its widest, or at least its most serious, inlet; playing havoc with the beliefs of many and blocking their way to the Church by throwing false lights and shades upon Catholic doctrine. A priest whose apostolic duties place upon him the guidance of inquirers to the faith has not infrequently to resign himself to long delays on minor points of doctrine or discipline. Again and again, when principles of belief and authority sufficient to cover the entire Catholic system seem to have been fully consented to, the work of catechising comes to a standstill on the catechumen's taking fright and shying at some item of belief already implicitly held in the acceptance of first principles. Moreover, many of those who do not seek admission or instruction in the Catholic faith from a denial of some of its fundamental tenets, are open to the charge of being swayed by their imagination to the discredit of their reason.

To take some examples. It is incredible how

much abhorrence is felt in certain quarters for the use of images. We have known a guileless and deeply religious soul who confessed to an irresistible feeling of sickness on seeing a priest lead the Rosary from a *priedieu* before Our Blessed Lady's statue. Mr. Kensit and his sympathisers seem to have a genuine distaste for any outward honour paid to the crucifix. Yet, as a recent writer in the *Church Times* has cleverly reminded them, on taking an oath in court it is the custom to kiss the Bible. With Catholic controversialists it is a commonplace when disputing on this point to urge the genuflexions and bowing and elaborate marks of honour paid to sovereigns. To see no harm in kneeling before Royalty or in kissing the Bible and yet to refuse to kiss the crucifix or kneel before a sacred image is an inconsistency due in great part to the imagination.

The Litany of Our Blessed Lady, with its varied list of titles, offers a serious obstacle to many non-Catholics. They cannot find in themselves to call the Virgin "Cause of Our Joy," "Ark of the Covenant," "Gate of Heaven," &c. Yet by their acceptance of the Council of Ephesus they have already given her the incomparably higher title of "Sancta Dei Genetrix," Mother of God, Θεοτόκος.

Those again who hold baptismal regeneration,

yet deny the Sacrament of Penance, lay themselves open to the charge of giving way to their imagination. That one man should be freed from sin by kneeling at the feet of another and hearing his acquittal seems the height of credulity to believe. Yet they have virtually conceded the possibility of such a power by allowing that the minister of baptism cleanses the soul by pouring water upon the brow. Indeed, the great objection to penance being its accompanying humiliation, they would seem to have conceded a still greater abasement by holding the justifying power of baptism. To many minds it may well be more humbling to submit publicly to a physical cleansing than to listen to a judicial acquittal in private.

The doctrine of Purgatory is untenable to those who are led by the imagination. The analogy of Nature, if realised to the full, would not merely prepare us for it, but would, perhaps, lead us to expect it. What evidence we find in the world goes a great way towards proving that our present state is one of trial and preparation and discipline. If such a state be reasonable before death, why not after death, especially since it is evident that the cleansing process can hardly be said to have reached completion in many cases at the hour of death?

One of the most common triumphs of the

imagination is the disdain felt for miracles. That a simple Franciscan friar should be taken up in ecstasy many miles above the earth is passed over as a legend, or at best, a hyperbole—so strongly is the theory of gravitation imbedded in the imagination. Yet that bodies shall fall is just as inconceivable on *a priori* grounds as that they should mount; nor is any one astonished on seeing his arms or limbs raised at the bidding of his soul. Are we not giving way to our imagination when we deny to spirit the power of raising the whole body? That it should be raised three inches or three miles is merely a question of less or more, which should be neglected in our reasoning, however much it may repel the imagination. Again, to believe that the dead have been brought back to life is considered by some as the highest pitch of human credulity. Yet, as a matter of fact, Nature daily brings thousands to life. Why should not some higher Power be able to bring them "back to life"?

The doctrine of transubstantiation is rejected by many who have little difficulty in admitting the transubstantiation of water into wine at Cana of Galilee. To others it seems inconceivable that accidents should exist without their proper substance; even whilst they admit that the human nature of Jesus Christ existed without its

personality; if, indeed, they hold the Divinity of Jesus Christ with all its consequences. Our Blessed Lord's lengthy discussion with the Jews, preserved for us by St. John in the sixth chapter of his Gospel, would almost seem to be summed up in this: "You will be called on to accept the greater, *i.e.* My Divinity; do not reject the less."

It may be asked, how is this abuse of the imagination to be accounted for? Perhaps the most influential reason is the confusion in our use of the term. It is easy to mistake reason for imagination, and imagination for reason. The word is loosely used for the power of inventiveness. A drama or poem of skilful plot and striking combinations is called a work of vivid imagination; whereas it might be more accurate to speak of our great dramas and poems as works of reason, enriching its productions with the more graceful trophies of the imagination. This inaccuracy of thought has become so widespread that one of the most constant obstacles to the teaching of scholastic philosophy is the powerlessness of certain minds to distinguish practically between an intellectual idea, judgment or argument and a phantasm of the imagination.

Hence to those who are in great part, if not altogether, bereft of imaginativeness, it is com-

mon to mistake their reasonings for fancies, and hence to fail in giving arguments their due. In the case of moral arguments and evidences of Christianity and the like, where "probability is the very guide of life," the mistake of confounding imagination with reason produces harmful results. Such minds will feel uneasy with the doctrine of the Trinity—to take one example for many. Baffled in their endeavour to realise it, they turn from all the delicate arguments in its favour as from an attempt to submerge reason.

The confusion between thoughts and fancies leads other men to trust their imagination in place of reason. They believe whatever can be outlined or pictured or drawn up in groups of statistics. Of Dean Stanley, Huxley once said: "Stanley could believe in anything of which he had seen the supposed site, but he was sceptical where he had not seen. At a breakfast at Monckton Milnes' just at the time of the Colenso row, Milnes asked my views on the Pentateuch, and I gave them. Stanley differed from me. The account of the creation in Genesis he dismissed as unhistorical; but the call of Abraham and the historical narrative of the Pentateuch he accepted. This was because he had seen Palestine—but he wasn't present at the creation."[1]

[1] *The Nineteenth Century*, August 1896. "T. H. Huxley," by W. Ward.

Birth, education, environment, help on this tyranny of the imagination. A conviction once begotten by its activity, day by day, as the despotic image grows more familiar and clearer, it asserts its power by stifling our reason and blunting the force of argument. Some men cannot handle or bear the sight of firearms without an irresistible dread. When every precaution has been employed and every means has been taken to show them that the weapon is unloaded and harmless, they will still reply: "I know it is unloaded. But it is safer to lay it aside. It might go off."

Only a sharp effort of the will can shake off this tyranny of the imagination in the things of faith, where intrinsic evidence is not strong enough to compel assent. At times the great act of submission to the authority of the Church puts an end, once and for all, to the fetters which an uncurbed fancy has forged round the soul. The majestic Bride of Christ fills the imagination with an object that suffers no lesser fancies to dispute its sway. Sometimes the process of drawing off from the servitude of the imagination is gradual. The tyranny has rooted itself too firmly and its effects are too widespread to be torn up by a sudden effort. The exercise of will power, which is the prime moving cause, and the meritorious principle of the act of faith, has a

daily duty of compelling the imagination to picture the reverse of much that it formerly held true. In the end, when the prejudices and fancies that swayed the mind are as good as supplanted by sober pictures of the truth, the peace of soul which results is a reward above measure for the closeness of the struggle. To have been forced for years to fight a daily battle against the presumptions of a lower faculty makes us wary in trusting to vivid imaginings. Constant exercise of our reason and our higher will has established our soul on a basis of truth, and we have only to be faithful in few things in order to merit the reward of being set over many and of seeing what we have so long felt to be true.

THE END

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